

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF
JOHN MASEFIELD

WANDERER EDITION

PLAYS (II)

ALSO BY JOHN MASEFIELD

PLAYS:

THE FAITHFUL: *A Tragedy in Three Acts*
GOOD FRIDAY: *A Play in Verse*
ESTHER. (*Adapted and partially translated from the French of Jean Racine*)
BERENICE. (*Adapted from the French of Jean Racine*)
MELONEY HOLTSBUR; or, *The Pangs of Love. A Play in Four Acts*
A KING'S DAUGHTER: *A Tragedy in Verse in Four Acts*
THE TRIAL OF JESUS
THE TRAGEDY OF NAN
TRISTAN AND ISOLT: *A Play in Verse*
THE COMING OF CHRIST
EASTER: *A Play for Singers*
END AND BEGINNING

POETRY:

DAUBER
THE DAFFODIL FIELDS
PHILIP THE KING AND OTHER POEMS
LOLLINGDON DOWNS AND OTHER POEMS, WITH SONNETS
A POEM AND TWO PLAYS. (*Rosas, a poem; The Locked Chest; The Sweeps of Ninety-Eight*)
REYNARD THE FOX
ENSLAVED AND OTHER POEMS
RIGHT ROYAL
SELECTED POEMS
KING COLE AND OTHER POEMS
COLLECTED POEMS
MIDSUMMER NIGHT AND OTHER TALES IN VERSE
MINNIE MAYLOW'S STORY AND OTHER TALES AND SCENES
A TALE OF TROY
A LETTER FROM PONTUS AND OTHER VERSE

FICTION:

SARD HARKER
ODTAA
THE MIDNIGHT FOLK
THE HAWBUCKS
THE BIRD OF DAWNING
THE TAKING OF THE GRAY
THE BOX OF DELIGHTS
VICTORIOUS TROY
EGGS AND BAKER

GENEAL:

GALLIPOLI
THE OLD FRONT LINE
ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON
THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME
RECENT PROSE
WITH THE LIVING VOICE
THE WANDERER OF LIVERPOOL
POETRY: A Lecture
THE CONWAY

JOHN MASEFIELD

PLAYS

VOLUME II



TRISTAN AND ISOLT
A KING'S DAUGHTER
END AND BEGINNING



WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD
LONDON :: TORONTO

FIRST PUBLISHED 1937

1574.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE WINDMILL PRESS, KINGSWOOD, SURREY

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

First performed by the Lena Ashwell Players at the Century Theatre, Archer Street, Bayswater, at 8.15 p.m., on Monday, 21st February, 1927, with the following cast:

(Characters in the order of their appearance.)

DESTINY	AGNES LAUCLAN
TRISTAN (a Pictish Prince)	JOHN LAURIE
DINAN (his Steward)	OSWALD D. ROBERTS
KOLBEIN (a Scandinavian Pirate) ..	HAROLD PAYTON
MARC (King of Cornwall)	KYNASTON REEVES
KAI (his Steward)	PATRICK GOVER
BEDWYR (his Bailiff)	DONALD FINLAY
SOWKIN (the Swineherd's Wife) ..	OLIVE WALTER
PIXNE (betrothed to the Swineherd's Son)	RACHEL HILL.
THURID (Kolbein's Queen)	AGNES LAUCLAN
ISOLT (her Daughter)	ESME CHURCH
BRANGWEN (her Waiting Gentlewoman)	LUCILLE LORNE
ARTHUR (Captain of the Romano-British Host)	HAROLD PAYTON
HOG (King Marc's Swineherd)	NORMAN CLARKE
PIGLING (his Son)	THOROLD DICKINSON
ATTENDANTS	{ BETTY BEARDMORE
	{ VICTORIA PARKER

(From Front Stage.)

DURFENY.

I am She who began ere Man was begotten,
I am deathless, unsleeping; my task is to make
Beginnings prosper to glory and crumble to rotten
By the deeds of women and men and the ways that they
take.

I am apple and snake.

I show Tristan, the prince, in glory beginning,
And Isol, the maid, in her beauty: I show these two
Passing from peace into bitter burning and sinning
From a love that was lighted of old. I display them anew
And the deaths that were due.

(Full stage. Tintagel.)

TRISTAN.

You have brought me over the sea, far from our home,
To a castle perch on a crag at the world's end,
Yet never said why. Then here, in the castle, father,
Nobody speaks, but all go still as the grave,
As though they were under a curse. What is this castle?

DINAN.

This is Tintagel, the court of the Cornish kings;
It is under a curse, for Kolbein, the pirate,
My enemy and yours, is a tyrant here.

TRISTAN.

Why do you call him "my enemy and yours"?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

DINAN.

Tristan, my son, it is time that you learned the truth.
Twenty years since, Meirchyon, King of Cornwall,
Lived here with Olwen, his daughter, and Marc, his son.
Kolbein the pirate killed King Meirchyon here,
Seized all Cornwall as his, seized Marc as a prize,
Would have seized Olwen as well, to serve his lust,
But that my master, King Tallorc, chancing to come here,
Saved her, by bearing her hence and marrying her.
Kolbein became our enemy thus, son Tristan.
He gave pursuit and killed King Tallorc, my master;
And the Queen, my mistress, died. After twenty years
I bring you here to a Cornwall under a curse:
Marc, a slave-King, Kolbein a tyrant still
Bleeding the groaning realm.
But stand aside; here Kolbein comes with King Marc:
We shall hear what new exaction the pirate claims.

(KOLBEIN enters with MARC.)

KOLBEIN.

Marc, I ordered a tribute of thirty lads,
The sons of nobles: are they here to be paid?

MARC.

No.

KOLBEIN.

Then why not?

MARC.

Because I beg you to spare them. A tax, of the sons of nobles, is tyranny.

KOLBEIN.

Being the tax I need, I bid you to pay it.

MARC.

But to drag sons from their parents is barbarous.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KOLBEIN.

To leave them to raise rebellion here is madness.

MARC.

Boys cannot raise rebellion; but outraged men may.

KOLBEIN.

I will deal with the boys now; with their fathers later.

MARC.

Will you not take instead some double tribute
Of copper and tin, or lincn, or grain, or beasts?

KOLBEIN.

No.

MARC.

Then a threefold tax?

KOLBEIN.

Not a thousandfold.

I have things and beasts sufficient: I want young men.

MARC.

Remember, you, that the gods befriend the friendless.

KOLBEIN.

I have not found it so: your father was friendless,
So I clove his skull for him here in this very hall.
Your sister's husband was friendless; so I clove his skull;
And you are friendless and I will cleave your skull, too,
Spite of the gods, if you go running athwart.
Go, gather me here those thirty within five minutes.

(He turns to go, growling.)

You Cornish slaves must learn who is master here.

(He goes out.)

MARC.

What are you, strangers? What brings you to Tintagel?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

DINAN.

I am a steward and harper, born in the north;
I come to speak with King Marc.

MARC.

You have spoken with him:
Now take his advice and go from this land accurst.

DINAN.

You do not remember me; but we met before,
I came here once with King Tallore, the time he wooed
And wedded the fair princess, your sister, Olwen.

MARC.

I was then nine. I forget you. Stay! are you Dinan?

DINAN.

Yes, lord, I am.

MARC.

Why, welcome, Dinan, to Cornwall,
Now I remember well: and is this your son?

DINAN.

Only a foster-son, lord: loved as my own son.

TRISTAN.

Am I not your son, then, father?

DINAN.

No, Tristan, indeed.

This lad is of royal stock, King Marc; your stock.
He is the son of King Tallore and your fair sister.

MARC.

Mind what you say, friend.

TRISTAN.

I, the son of King Tallore?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

They swore to me that my sister died in childbed,
With the child dead, too.

DINAN.

I spread that story, my lord,
Lest Kolbein or Kolbein's men should murder him.
The Queen, your sister, died, but her son survived,
And this is he, Prince Tristan, named from King Tristan,
King Tallorc's father: he is your nephew, King Marc;
Is he not like your sister?

MARC.

Yes; but, by heaven . . .
This is a marvellous thing: proofs must be given.

DINAN.

Here is Queen Olwen's ring: here is her brooch.
But on her death-bed she told me the rhyme unknown
To all but those of the blood of the House of Cornwall.
She said that that would convince.

(He whispers to MARC.)

MARC.

It does convince me.
You are Olwen's son, my nephew; welcome, then, home.

DINAN.

My prince and king, I have loved you for all these years
Only for this great day. I kneel to my King.

TRISTAN.

That you shall never do.

MARC.

No, never, indeed.

Dinan, most faithful steward and loving friend,
You shall kneel no more to kings: I create you lord
Of my southern march.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

DINAN.

I am a steward and harper, born in the north;
I come to speak with King Marc.

MARC.

You have spoken with him:
Now take his advice and go from this land accurst

DINAN.

You do not remember me; but we met before,
I came here once with King Tallorc, the time he
And wedded the fair princess, your sister, Olwe!

MARC.

I was then nine. I forget you. Stay! are you Din

DINAN.

Yes, lord, I am.

MARC.

Why, welcome, Dinan, to Cornwall,
Now I remember well: and is this your son?

DINAN.

Only a foster-son, lord: loved as my own son.

TRISTAN.

Am I not your son, then, father?

DINAN.

No, Tristan

This lad is of royal stock, King Marc; your stock.
He is the son of King Tallorc and your fair sister.

MARC.

Mind what you say, friend.

TRISTAN.

I, the son of Kin

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

I am Tristan, son of that husband and that daughter.
You are my father's and my grandfather's killer;
You shall pay me for their blood. Come out and fight.

KOLBEIN.

Tallorc's and Olwen's son! Why, they had no son.

DINAN.

This is their son. I nurtured him secretly,
So that you should not kill him.

KOLBEIN.

Dinan, the steward.

MARC.

There are better proofs than that; he is my nephew.

KOLBEIN.

I see he is; he is Olwen's son to the life.
Boy, Tristan, son; I loved your mother of old;
I killed your father for love of her. It is hard
To fight you, who are so like her.

Listen, now, Tristan:

Let us not fight; but take your kingdom, and also
Ask what you please in settlement of our feud.

TRISTAN.

I ask for a fair fight to a finish with you.

KOLBEIN.

As you prefer. We will fight with swords then, at once.
This, being a blood-feud, I will swear my followers
To abide by what may fall. See there in the bay
A rock with standing for two? That's where we'll fight.
We two will row there alone and fight to the utterance.
You agree, that that seems fair?

TRISTAN.

Most manlike and fair.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

DINAN.

He is merciless to the beaten, fair to others.

KOLBEIN.

So you will find me, Dinan, if I kill Tristan.
Marc, who says nothing, is doubtless thinking the more.
You will be happy with Kolbein killed and away?

MARC.

No: I do not wish you killed.

KOLBEIN.

No, you speak the truth.
Though I killed your father and took your land, you like
me.

Well, the cockerel has not killed me yet; far from it.
I am still King. Come down the crag to the beach.
I have wisdom, you have youth: it is fair for each.

(They go out.)

BEDWYR *(entering)*.

Kai, I have word that Arthur is coming to court
To ask for men for the war against the heathen.

KAI.

It is not likely that Kolbein will grant the men.

BEDWYR.

Not unless urged; but urge it, Kai. I shall urge it.

KAI.

Urge it? That must depend upon Kolbein's will.
And Kolbein's will must depend upon events;
And events, good Bedwyr, depend on more than me.
But leave me Arthur's letter.

(BEDWYR goes.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

A good man, Bedwyr,
But narrow in view; no subtlety, no breadth.

(SOWKIN enters.)

What are you, good woman?

SOWKIN.

Sowkin, Hog Swineherd's wife.

KAI.

Why do you enter here?

SOWKIN.

Bringing our duty,
Our Easter duty of March black-puddings, lord.
There, sir, a love of a pudding, as black as medicine,
And thick and soft as a lady's thigh: do feel it.
There's something to lean on in a day of trouble.
There's a lordly life, to eat one of these at supper,
And lie awake all night feeling it doing you good.

KAI.

What vile beast's corpse did you desecrate for this?

SOWKIN.

A love of a pig, lord, who felt like heaven itself.

KAI.

Remove it into the garbage before it bursts.

SOWKIN.

But it is for the King, sir; all blood and onions.

KAI.

Go, bury it as I bid, and never again
Enter this hall. Your place is the gate or the sty.

(PIXNE enters.)

You, girl, what brings you here?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

PIXNE.

O Sir Kai, a stranger
Is going to fight King Kolbein there on the rock.

KAI.

To fight King Kolbein? Quick, I must go: make way, girl!
(KAI goes.)

SOWKIN.

What are they fighting for?

PIXNE.

A blood-feud, the men said.
It is King Marc's nephew, they said. Oh, he is handsome!
He went just by me, with his eyes shining like stars.
Oh, I hope he will win.

SOWKIN.

You, think of no strangers;
Think of my son, my Pigling, whom you're to marry.

PIXNE.

So I do, Madam Sowkin; but this man is fighting
So that we shall be free, so the men were saying.
He may be all bleeding red. Oh, I wish we could hear!

SOWKIN.

Here's somebody come: who is it?

PIXNE.

The stranger's friend,
All white as a ghost.
(DINAN enters.)

DINAN.

You Cornish women, be quick,
Fetch balsams; and run for water and make a bed.

PIXNE.

Is the King's nephew wounded?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

DINAN.

Wounded to death.

SOWKIN.

Run, Pixne, up to the spring; fetch water, quickly.

(PIXNE goes.)

If we bring this chair, it will serve. What happened, sir?

DINAN.

My boy, whom I loved as a son.

SOWKIN.

Did he fight the king?

DINAN.

Yes, he fought Kolbein: much as a young red stag
Might fight with a mountain bull: he attacked and
attacked,

But Kolbein stood and pushed him off with his shield.

Then the lad, tiring, rusht and struck on the helm

And Kolbein tottered as though he were hurt. Our
hearts

Leapt when we saw him totter. A good blow more

Might have ended Kolbein then: but the boy was spent.

Then Kolbein laughed and strode to him and smote him

Grovelling to the rock. So, seeing him down,

I came to ready his death-bed.

SOWKIN.

We'll help the lad.

You fly to a safety, sir, before Kolbein comes.

DINAN.

No, I will stay with my lad. Listen. They're coming.

Bearing him up the steps cut in the cliff.

TRISTAN.

Take care.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

DINAN.

Come, madam, help me.

(TRISTAN enters.)

TRISTAN.

I am only bruised, not hurt.

Help him into the chair; bring water and wine.

(KOLBEIN is helped in.)

KOLBEIN.

That is the last time Kolbein will climb that stairway.

Dinan, why do you gape? You thought I had killed him?

I had, too: only I slipped: it was too great odds.

Wisdom against man's youth, for youth has the luck.

I slipped as I went to end him: he ended me.

(He drinks.)

Listen you, Marc.

I have made your fiefs and mine one Kingdom only.

Let that be kept. I have a daughter in Ireland . . .

Isolt, her name is. Marc, you must marry Isolt . . .

My Irish fief shall be yours then; Cornwall, too.

Will you marry Isolt?

MARC.

If she will have me.

KOLBEIN.

Swear

MARC.

I swear to marry your daughter, if she consent.

KOLBEIN.

If she refuse, may my dying curses blast her.

Now, Tristan, you. Harken the rest.

When I am dead, carry my body to Ireland,

Tell my Queen Thurid and Isolt to take you to friendship.

The blood-feud is to end, on pain of my curse.

Bring Isolt back to Tintagel to marry Marc.

Swear you will do this.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

I swear I will do your will.

KOLBEIN.

When you have borne my corpse home,
Bid my men bury me in my ship on the beach,
So that in gales the shingle will screech above me.

Now I'll die standing up. *(He stands.)*

I am Kolbein, you dead, Kolbein Blood-axe, the King!
(He falls.)

MARC.

He is dead, King Kolbein.

DINAN.

Justice is done on him now.

TRISTAN.

Cover his face.

KAI.

All hail, King Marc of Cornwall!

BEDWYR.

All hail, Prince Tristan, setter free of the land!

TRISTAN.

King Marc, may this body be decked and carried to ship?
Then I will sail at once for the Princess Isolt.

MARC.

Shroud him and strew him, you women. Follow me, men.
(He goes out with the MEN.)

SOWKIN.

With a proud forefoot this ship rose to the sea,
But under all seas and ships are the dooms waiting.

CURTAIN.

(Half-minute's interval.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

(Full stage. Coisnafon.)

QUEEN THURID. ISOLT. BRANGWEN. TRISTAN.

TRISTAN.

I come as a herald from Cornwall. I say that Kolbein
Is dead of a wound I dealt him in fight.

QUEEN.

What madness
Brings you to tell the news to his widow and child?

TRISTAN.

My oath to the dead. I add: it is Kolbein's will
That you take me to your friendship, ending the feud.

QUEEN.

Kolbein's will, do you say? What is my will, think you?
Mine, whom you widowed?

TRISTAN.

Heralds are sacred to men.

QUEEN.

To men, maybe, not to women: you shall learn, herald,
What kind of friendship the widow of Kolbein grants.

TRISTAN.

Call up your people, have me slung to the wolf-hounds.

QUEEN.

This kind of friendship I grant: my heart's best thanks.
You have freed me from the beast who murdered my
lover.

My girl's best thanks: you have freed her from the threat
Of the lust of his pirate friend.

We take you to friendship;
There shall be no feud between us, Tristan the Prince.

ISOLT.

As my mother says, we are slaves set free: we bless you.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

I thank you both.

I am charged by King Marc of Cornwall
(Under Kolbein's will) to offer this fair princess
His hand and crown.

QUEEN.

It is nobly offered of Marc.

TRISTAN.

While you debate the offer, it is my office
To bury Kolbein; will you attend his burial?

QUEEN.

I have longed for his burial more than twenty years.

ISOLT.

He killed my father the day before I was born,
It was that that made me his daughter. Bury him deep.

TRISTAN.

He killed my father also, before I was born.
He shall be buried deep.

(He goes out.)

QUEEN.

Here is the granting of twenty years of prayer,
Kolbein is dead; you are set free, with the offer
To be queen to King Marc of Cornwall, also set free:
He, too, was a slave to Kolbein; he is young, just, gentle.
What do you think of the suit?

ISOLT.

You are foretelling . . .

What do you think?

QUEEN.

I think he is worthy of you.

ISOLT.

Worthy, yes; but what will the end of it be?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

QUEEN.

That which you make.

ISOLT.

Only a part can be made . . .
Something tells me that there is no quiet for women
Who come as foreigner queens into stranger courts.

QUEEN.

No fate is to be dreaded, but borne, or changed.

ISOLT.

Mother, what will my fate be?

QUEEN.

A strange and a royal.

ISOLT.

Happy?

QUEEN.

Much mixed with love out of the ages.

ISOLT.

There is no avoiding fate, going or staying.
And to go is royal and liker a queen than to stay.
So I will go to this Marc.

(*TRISTAN enters.*)

QUEEN.

Is the dead man buried?

TRISTAN.

His men have laid him in howe: I have scattered earth.

QUEEN.

The winter then being gone, let the spring begin.

ISOLT.

Prince, I accept Marc's offer of hand and crown.

TRISTAN.

In my uncle's name, I thank you for this great grace.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

And to you, who have brought the grace, I offer thanks.

QUEEN.

How soon will you rob me of my daughter, O Prince?

TRISTAN.

Now, if she will; the wind is fair, the ship ready.

ISOLT.

It shall be now.

(She goes out.)

TRISTAN.

I will order the ship brought near.

(He goes out.)

QUEEN.

The day that Isolt was born, the spae-wife told me

That I had borne one knitted to tragical love.

What can love and knowledge avail, with Destiny?

(She fetches a casket.)

Is Brangwen there?

(BRANGWEN enters.)

Brangwen, you follow the princess into Cornwall.

Swear that upon her marriage day you will make

Occasion for Marc and Isolt to drink this.

It is a love-drink: those who drink it together

Are bound in a lasting love. See that they drink it.

BRANGWEN.

I swear: they shall drink this wine on their marriage
night.

QUEEN.

Thank you, good Brangwen. I leave the flasket with you.

(The QUEEN goes out.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BRANGWEN.

Would I might drink it in love, that a King might love
me!

(TRISTAN enters.)

TRISTAN.

The ship is ready below; will you tell the princess?

BRANGWEN.

I will go tell her at once.

(BRANGWEN goes out.)

TRISTAN.

When I have landed her, I must leave Tintagel;
I dare not stay for her wedding, nor see her again.
I cannot look on her face without loving her.

(ISOLT enters.)

ISOLT.

Since we sail at once, how soon shall we reach Tintagel?

TRISTAN.

Sunset to-morrow.

ISOLT.

It is a leap into darkness.

TRISTAN.

But you bring light.

ISOLT.

Shall I see you often in Cornwall?

TRISTAN.

No, lady; never.

ISOLT.

Never? Why not?

TRISTAN.

Because I go to my Kingdom.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

You mean that we may not meet, after to-morrow?

(*TRISTAN nods.*)

Not even there at my wedding?

TRISTAN.

I shall wish you joy.

ISOLT.

Stay till then, prince, that at least one friendly face
May shine among all those haters of foreign queens.

TRISTAN.

No one who looks on you will ever hate you,
Save from jealousy or envy: but after to-morrow
I shall not see you. I shall not forget you, though.

ISOLT.

Nor I you, Tristan, because you have altered my life.

TRISTAN.

And you mine, Isolt, as I thank God. But come now
To the ship that strains to be gone, and the life beginning.

ISOLT.

Look, here is wine: will you drink to the life beginning?

TRISTAN.

With all my heart, but I see no wine-cup nor horn.

ISOLT.

There in the niche on the stair is a cup of crystal.

TRISTAN.

It is broken to pieces, see . . .

ISOLT.

It was Kolbein's cup,
He called it his Luck: it is broken like Kolbein's self.
What can we drink from?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

The wine is fragrant as June.

(DINAN enters.)

DINAN.

I bring a gift for the princess Isolt, a shell
Drawn up but now in the bay with the anchor flukes.
We say that the sea-brought things bring fortune, lady,
So we cleansed it: it is strange: may it bring you fortune.

ISOLT.

I thank you for gift and wish: strange things drift hither.

DINAN.

Princess, your gear is aboard and the ship is ready.

TRISTAN.

We will come aboard in a few short moments, then.

(DINAN goes.)

ISOLT.

Here is the fortunate cup brought by the sea.
I drink to your fortune, prince. Will you drink to mine?

TRISTAN.

To your fortune, Isolt, princess: be it ever happy.
O golden beauty, I love you so that I die.
If you cannot speak some solace, I am but dead.

ISOLT.

I cannot speak a solace, being so swayed;
But you are my one thought, you are my life, my love;
I care not what may happen so I have you.

(They embrace.)

TRISTAN.

To-night at sea we shall be each other's, beloved.

(TRISTAN goes out.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

I am sworn to Marc . . . what matter? Though the world
end

I have drunken a queen's fortune, O love, O love!

(BRANGWEN enters.)

BRANGWEN.

Lady, the Queen your mother and all the house
Are there at the ship to see you sail.

ISOLT.

I come, then.

BRANGWEN.

O lady, my mistress, you have drunk of the wine.
It is magical wine, and I know not what may come.

ISOLT.

Can it matter what may come? I have been in heaven;
The joy of its beauty is over me like great flames.

CURTAIN.

(Half-minute's interval.)

(Full stage. Tintagel.)

ARTHUR.

Now that the wedding is over, I must be gone.
King Marc has a lovely bride.

KAI.

The wedding went well,
Save for young Tristan: a most rude, wild young man;
He thrust Queen Isolt ashore and would not stay
Even to wish his uncle joy. What could he mean?

ARTHUR.

He needed the wind and tide. Now I'm for the war.
King Marc is sending me men: farewell, good Kai.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

Farewell, Lord Arthur.

(ARTHUR goes.)

A good man, but no depth.

Why should this Tristan fly like that from the wedding?

He has offered Queen Isolt love and been rebuffed.

I know young men: it is that: she has boxed his ears.

(TRISTAN enters.)

TRISTAN.

Where is Queen Isolt? I wish to speak with Queen Isolt.

KAI.

Her Majesty has gone to the bridal chamber.

TRISTAN.

The King's not there?

KAI.

His Majesty is in council,

Deeply concerned that you were not at his wedding.

TRISTAN.

I cannot help his concern. Where is the bride-room?

KAI.

You cannot go to the Queen of Cornwall's room.

TRISTAN.

Where is it? I wish to see her.

KAI.

My prince, consider:

She is unrobing now, on her marriage night.

(ISOLT enters.)

ISOLT.

Good steward, Sir Kai, will you find Sir Constans for me?

Prince Tristan, we thought you had fled. Welcome to

Cornwall.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

I will find Sir Constans as Your Majesty bids.

ISOLT.

I thank you.

(KAI goes.)

Why did you fly before our wedding?

TRISTAN.

Fly, O Isolt, beloved!

ISOLT.

O Tristan, hush!

(KAI re-entering.)

May I bring commands to Sir Constans?

ISOLT.

We wish to see him.

KAI.

Your Majesty will pardon my asking more . . .
Is it your pleasure that he attend you here?

ISOLT.

No; at the robing-room.

KAI (*going again*).

Madam, he shall attend.

TRISTAN.

Isolt, my darling, this marriage must not be.
Whatever we swore or promised to Kolbein or Marc,
Is burnt all blank by our love. Why are you shrinking?
Kai's gone.

ISOLT.

But he suspects; he is peering and prying.
No: he is coming back. Stand further away.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

Pardon my troubling, but at which robing-room
Shall he attend?

ISOLT.

The robing-room of the Queen.

KAI.

At the Queen's. I thank Your Grace.

TRISTAN.

Will you now leave us?

KAI.

Pardon, Prince Tristan, the Queen's will must be done.

ISOLT.

The Queen thanks you, Sir Kai, for zealous service.

KAI.

I thank the Queen: may she never lack loyal servants.
(KAI goes.)

ISOLT.

You see that he suspects.

TRISTAN.

We are done with suspicion . . .

What they suspect or know is naught to the truth.
We are each other's, and this pretence that we tried—
That you could keep to your promise and I to my oath—
Is nothing, nothing, but false; it is false as hell.
And I am here. Look, darling, you know as I do
That we are each other's. You are mine, mine only.

ISOLT.

Marc will be here, Kai said: somebody said . . .
Look at the door.

TRISTAN.

There is no one there.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

Not yet.
But I am Marc's wife, with a ring; in a few moments
I have to go to his bed.

TRISTAN.

That you never shall!

ISOLT.

He has talked of it all day long; he is greedy for me.

TRISTAN.

Greedy? That scholar? Kolbein's slave? Take the ring
off.

Look . . . we must get from this, back to my ship.

ISOLT.

Where is your ship? In the harbour below?

TRISTAN.

No, Isolt.

The harbour below is barred, with a chain across it.

My ship could not get in: she is there . . . to the south.

ISOLT.

How did you get here then? Through the gates?

TRISTAN.

I climbed
From the sea, and over the walls, for the gates were
locked.

ISOLT.

But the crag is rotten with wrack, and a slip means death.

TRISTAN.

It was to get to you. I have left a rope there;
I could lower you down.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

I could not: it is too giddy,
To swing down there . . . I have seen that terrible crag.

TRISTAN.

I would make you safe, with a knot.

ISOLT.

It is beyond me.

TRISTAN.

You are the Queen . . . order the gates to be opened.

ISOLT.

Kai holds the keys: he would suspect, if I asked.

TRISTAN.

He dare not suspect the Queen.

ISOLT.

Even if I asked,
Even if I had the keys, if we climbed the stairway
Down to the beach, Marc or his knights would come, too.
We could never reach your ship.

TRISTAN.

Then I'll go to Marc,
Tell him our love and force him to fight for you.

ISOLT.

No, for God's sake do not, Tristan; his men would kill you.

TRISTAN.

What else can I do? We are knotted into the nets.

ISOLT.

Brangwen has gone.

TRISTAN.

Gone where?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

For my mother's love-drink.
Marc and I are to drink it together in bed,
So that we love each other . . . O Tristan, I cannot!

TRISTAN.

I'll tear him in pieces rather!

ISOLT.

O quiet! quiet!
Somebody comes . . .

(*Enter MARC, KAI, BEDWYR.*)

MARC.

We have missed you, nephew, to-day, at our wedding
feast.
Why were you absent?

TRISTAN.

I chose it.

MARC.

How do you come now?
Your ship was not in the port when the chain was drawn,
Nor were you yourself in the castle when gates were
locked.

Kai thinks that you scaled the crag.

TRISTAN.

I scaled it: what then?

MARC.

Then this is your rope that you left upon the wall?

TRISTAN.

It is my rope.

MARC.

You need not have run such dangers,
Gates would have opened for you, my sister's son,
You are my heir, remember.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

At present, my lord.

MARC.

But I need you, nephew. . . . And why did you not
bring Dinan?

I need him, too. I cannot let this day pass
Without a sign of the love I bear to you both.
I have a gift for you: come.

(He leads TRISTAN off.)

KAI.

Sir Constans attends in the robing-tower, madam.

ISOLT.

I thank you. I shall not need him.

KAI.

He shall be told so.

ISOLT.

Sir Kai, you were charming in all your welcome to me.

KAI.

You are gracious, madam.

ISOLT.

Sir Kai, might a new-crowned Queen
Ride for one short half-hour into the moonlight?
I long to be quiet after the feast's tumult.

KAI.

Take horse and ride alone?

ISOLT.

Friends might come with me.

KAI.

I will ask King Marc, who will doubtless gladly ride,
Though the horse-boys are off duty till to-morrow.
To ride in the moonlight doubtless would be quieting.
(KAI goes.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

He knows, that pryer and scraper; and Marc must suspect. . . .

If we get horse, we will gallop: but shall we get horse?
(BRANGWEN enters.)

BRANGWEN.

The cup of magical love-drink is made ready,
The bridal-chamber is deckt. King Marc has sent me
To bid you come to disrobe.

ISOLT.

I have sent to the King
Saying that I entreat a half-hour's quiet,
Riding into the moonlight.

BRANGWEN.

Was it Sir Kai
That you trusted with the message?

ISOLT.

Yes, it was Kai.

BRANGWEN.

I heard him say to Sir Bedwyr there at the door,
Even as I passed, that he would not bring such a message.
They laughed and agreed.

ISOLT.

Where is Prince Tristan, Brangwen?

BRANGWEN.

But, my mistress, he sailed this morning, leaving us here.

ISOLT.

He was here a moment ago. Where did he go?
Has King Marc put him in prison?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BRANGWEN.

I know not, madam.
He is not now with the King, for the King sent me
To say he awaited you.

ISOLT.

I must see Prince Tristan;
Must know where he is; must plan with him what to do.

BRANGWEN.

Madam, I hoped that all that folly was over.

ISOLT.

Over! my God!

BRANGWEN.

But you have married the King;
Who loves you, madam, and now is expecting you.

ISOLT.

Go back to him and say I am suddenly ill.

" BRANGWEN.

That he will know to be false.

ISOLT.

I am so ill, Brangwen,
That to touch that creature will kill me.

BRANGWEN.

O madam, no!
He is a good, just King, handsome and noble;
Trust to his love, Queen Isolt, and give him yours.
That was your promise and oath, and your mother's wish
As well as his own great longing. You shrink at first,
But a husband is God's gift as a help to women.
Besides, the magical wine will make you love him.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

I have pledged Tristan in that: no wine, no magic,
No wonder more in the world can alter my love:
I am Tristan's queen, to the depths.

BRANGWEN.

O madam, hush!

(Enter KAI and BEDWYR.)

KAI.

Madam, I grieve to intrude. I come from the King
To ask that, graciously, you forbear your riding
Until to-morrow, an hour and day more fitting.

ISOLT.

Say I am fevered, Sir Kai, and long to be out.

KAI.

Madam, I said so. The King replied as I say.

BEDWYR.

He added, madam, that we might crave your consent
To light you hence to the King, who is much concerned
To hear of your fever and longs to comfort you.

ISOLT.

I am not ready to go. Where is Prince Tristan?

KAI.

Gone to his rest.

ISOLT.

What, killed?

KAI.

No, to bed, madam,

In the castle's landward wing.

BEDWYR.

May we return,

To light you hence, in a moment?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

Give me two moments.

KAI.

Thank you, Queen Isolt.

BEDWYN.

We humbly thank you and go.

ISOLT.

See, I am jailed by this Marc; watched, wardered, turn-keyed.

Would I were like the wolf that, trapped by both feet,
Gnaws them both off and hobbles away alive.

Girl, there's some cranny or attic where I can hide?

BRANGWEN.

They would soon find you.

ISOLT.

But there is the coil of rope;

I will tie that to the wall and let myself down.

BRANGWEN.

The sentries are on the wall now, going their rounds.
You would be stopped on the way! O beautiful mistress,
Your queenly destiny calls, accept it queenly.

ISOLT.

I cannot be queen to Marc.

BRANGWEN.

But you are his queen.

ISOLT.

Only by word, never in heart.

BRANGWEN.

Word suffices.

He has rights upon you: right to use force . . .

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

I, too,
Have a little force, and a little knife, my Brangwen.

BRANGWEN.

Queen, if you threaten yourself, I will cry for help.
(*TRISTAN enters.*)

ISOLT.

O Tristan, save me, lest I be dragged to the King!
Where have you been?

TRISTAN.

With the King . . . and seeking a way.

ISOLT.

Can we escape?

TRISTAN.

Not now, nor to-morrow, maybe.

ISOLT.

You mean I must go to the King?

TRISTAN.

That, or I kill him.

ISOLT.

O Brangwen, save me! I cannot face it, I cannot.

BRANGWEN.

My queen, take courage.

ISOLT.

I will not go to him: no.
Girl, it is dark; for this night, only this night,
Go to the King in my place.

BRANGWEN.

O my mistress, Isolt,
Never speak such things!

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

Only to pledge him the wine . . .
He will not see, will not know; will you do it, girl?

BRANGWEN.

O hush, madam, hush! the very thought is such shame.

ISOLT.

I saved you, body and soul, when you were a girl.

BRANGWEN.

You stopped my being a slave, and I thank you and bless
you,
And pray God bless you, for that; but this is a sin.

ISOLT.

It's a service you shall perform when your princess bids.
Go, or I'll kill you.

TRISTAN.

See, good Brangwen, we two
Are taken in nets; will you do this thing to save us?

BRANGWEN.

I should be known, and whipped by the guards and
spat at.

TRISTAN.

No, girl, I promise not. I am asked by the King
To serve the love-drink there in the marriage-bed.
I have seen that the room is dark: I will make it darker
With but one taper, and that away from the bed.
You will be in the bed before him in almost darkness,
And stay till you drink the love-drink: that's all we ask.

BRANGWEN.

All! He will know that I am not the Queen.

TRISTAN.

How can he?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BRANGWEN.

He will want more from me than the loving-cup.

ISOLT.

If we drug the wine with this, he will fall asleep.

BRANGWEN.

You will not bid me do this terrible thing!

ISOLT.

As soon as he is asleep, you may steal away.

BRANGWEN.

Where shall I steal to, Queen, to hide and be cleansed?

TRISTAN.

Here, to our loves and our gratitude, good Brangwen.

BRANGWEN.

Suppose this drug that you give should kill the King?

TRISTAN.

Girl, till your mistress had this thought, I had planned
To kill the King as he came to the marriage-bed.
That I will still do, if you do not consent,
And you, too, knowing so much.

BRANGWEN.

No, do not threaten me, sir.
I will do this for my mistress, to whom I swore.

ISOLT.

Brangwen, the gods reward you.

TRISTAN.

We will reward you.

BRANGWEN.

But, hark! here the Knights are coming: it is too late.

(Enter KAI and BEDWYR.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

Sweet Knights, I am grateful for your loving care.
I will not trouble you now to light me hence.

KAI.

Queen, the King charges us that we bring you to him.

ISOLT.

Kai, the Queen charges you that you tell the King
That she, on her marriage-night, will now put off
All ceremony and claim; she is now going
To prepare herself for bed. Good-night, Prince Tristan.
Good night, Sir Kai and Sir Bedwyr. Come, Brangwen,
come.

(She and BRANGWEN go.)

KAI.

Good night, Queen Isolt.

BEDWYR.

Good night.

MARC.

Is Prince Tristan there?

(MARC enters.)

TRISTAN.

Yes, here.

MARC.

And the Queen?

KAI.

Just gone to her robing-room.

MARC.

Is her maid Brangwen with her? Call her back, will you?

(KAI goes.)

Come, Bedwyr, go to your bed, you are bed-weary.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BEDWYR.

I thank Your Grace: may to-night be a blessed night
To you and to Cornwall, King.

(He goes out.)

MARC.

I thank you, Bedwyr.

KAI *(returning)*.

The girl will be here at once.

MARC.

Thank you, good Kai;

Now you, to your rest.

KAI *(kneeling)*.

I pray good night to my King,
And joy, with a loving Queen, who will bring an heir,
May never a traitor come 'twixt you and the Queen.

MARC.

Amen to that.

KAI.

Will Prince Tristan say Amen?

TRISTAN.

I was praying, Sir Kai; I did not hear your prayer.

KAI.

I will say good night.

MARC.

Good night, good steward.

TRISTAN.

Good night.

(KAI goes. BRANGWEN enters.)

MARC.

A good, true servant, Sir Kai. I sent for you, girl,
To give you this jewel of gold. As my Queen's servant
May your life in this court be happy.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BRANGWEN.

I thank Your Majesty.

(BRANGWEN goes.)

MARC.

Marriage is solemn, nephew.

I have been in the vaults where all our House is buried,
Each in his bed of stone with his mask of gold.

My father and his and his, eleven dead Kings,
Each felt as I feel now, and all are still here;
For a House is a tree of souls; some, roots in the earth;
Some, leaves in the air . . . all one.

Iad, you must soon marry.

Isolt and I will think of a wife for you.

TRISTAN.

I am not thinking of marriage this yet awhile.

MARC.

It is man's happiest state. Will you follow Brangwen?
And bring me word if the Queen has retired to bed?

(TRISTAN goes.)

Invisible spirits of all my ancestors
Who watch o'er the House ye made, help me to fortune.
O unseen helpers, who once were my forefathers,
Help, that the tragical fate which wrecked my boyhood
May never return.

(TRISTAN enters.)

TRISTAN.

Sir, Brangwen tells me that the Queen has retired;
She has darkened the bedroom for you.

MARC.

Let us then go.

I have not angered nor vexed you?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

Never, sir. Why?

MARC.

You fled my wedding, and then you have wished me no luck.

TRISTAN.

I fled your wedding, indeed; being no courtier.
As for my wishes, I wish more than I can say.

MARC.

I am glad it is not anger, my sister's son.
Bring us the love-drink soon as I strike on the floor.
I will strike thus.

(They go upstairs.)

(ISOLT enters.)

ISOLT.

This is the love-drink. Brangwen is in his bed,
Waiting his coming. What if he see through the cheat?
Or if she betray it? A whisper, a gesture's enough.
He's in his room there, undressing; this bridegroom and
beast . . .
Not for me, thank God, not for me.

TRISTAN.

Queen Isolt . . . Isolt.

ISOLT.

Hush, Tristan; not so loud.

TRISTAN.

The girl is in bed.

It is dark, but I'll leave it darker.

ISOLT.

But oh, if she cry!

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

She dare not utter a sound, even if he urge her.
Where is your sleepy drug to mix with the wine?

ISOLT.

I have not mixed it already, because . . . ah! hark.

TRISTAN.

It is the King.

(*MARC appears above.*)

MARC.

I am ready now for the love-drink.

Is that the girl?

TRISTAN.

It is. I will bring the wine.

(*MARC goes.*)

ISOLT.

My mother asked that the bride and her groom should
drink

This wine, on their marriage night. Pledge your love,
husband.

TRISTAN.

To our love, sweet wife, wherever it lead. (*He drinks.*)

ISOLT.

To our love,

Sweet husband, with all my worship, now and for ever.

(*She drinks, they embrace. MARC strikes the floor.*)

TRISTAN.

O my love, what was it struck then? That knocking
sounded

Like laughter from outside life. All this trick with the
girl

Does but delay our trouble, you are still his.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

I will be yours on my marriage night, my Tristan.
Here is the sleepy drug, for Marc shall sleep sound.
When he wakes, I must be at his side; until then, yours.
(TRISTAN *takes the drink upstairs.*)

ISOLT.

He will kill them, if they discover!
Yesterday morning
I had not seen him, and now he is all my world.
He must be serving them now.

(*A clatter above.*)

O God, what was that?
Has he killed them? What was it that clattered? Who's
there?
What if Kai knew it and killed him? Where is he now?
Why does he not come, or give signal?

(TRISTAN *descends.*)

Is that you, Tristan?
What happened?

TRISTAN.

Listen, love, listen.

ISOLT.

All's silent.

TRISTAN.

Quiet, still: do not you breathe. No; he's drugged: it is
safe.

ISOLT.

Why are you shaking so? Did he discover her?

TRISTAN.

No;
But she was so shaking, she scarcely could drink: having
drunk,

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

She dropped the gold cup on the floor.
I picked up the cup, but the wine was all spilled. What
he drank
Was the bitter brown ooze from the drug: it has sent
him to sleep.

ISOLT.

Marc will not love her, then, but she will love him.

TRISTAN.

It is a grim night for the girl: she was proud.
She shuddered.

ISOLT.

To-morrow will be grim for us: we may shudder.

TRISTAN.

Would God

To-morrow night never dawn.

ISOLT.

It may never dawn.

The world may end. Listen. The lovers are quiet.
Now, for to-night, we have each other, beloved.
Will you not take me, Tristan?

CURTAIN.

(Three minutes' interval.)

(Same Scene.)

KAR.

You fellow, what are you doing here? Who are you?

HOG.

Hog, the King's swineherd, sir, that the King sent for,
About the killing of hogs.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

I am the steward.
I will consider what hogs shall be killed, if any.
Be off now, where you belong.

HOG.

May I speak to the King?

KAI.

To the King? No, certainly not. Get out!

(Hog goes aside. BEDWYR enters.)

Ah, Bedwyr, welcome.

The King will not believe that Tristan's her lover.
I gave him proofs, but he loves the Queen too well.

(TRISTAN appears above.)

Still, I made him promise to set a trap for Tristan.
The Queen has gone to stay at her summer manor;
The King has given out that to-day he will start
For a long week's summer-hunting out on the moor.
That is the trap: and Tristan has fallen into it.
He has told Marc that he feels too ill to come hunting,
He has sent Dinan to beg the Queen to return.
The Queen will return to-night; Tristan will court her:
Marc and we shall return, and catch them, and end them.

(ARTHUR enters.)

BEDWYR.

This is your plot, Kai. What does Arthur think about it?

ARTHUR.

I take no hand in't. It is no quarrel of ours,
It lies between Marc and Tristan.

Besides, these quarrels
Must be patched up; we need our strength for the war.

(He goes out. MARC enters.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

We'll ride to this hunting, then. You, Bedwyr and Kai,
It will be ill for you if to-night's trap fail.
Swineherd, what is it?

KAI.

I settled his business, lord.

MARC.

I see my swineherds myself. What news from the sties?

HOG.

O my lord King, fine news:—
Farrowing came like the lily and went like the rose,
Beautiful; ten to the sow; and to-morrow's the year.

MARC.

Ah, yes, I promised that if you could keep swine a year,
Not losing one from a wolf or a robber, I'd grant you
Freedom to you and to yours: so I will; have you lost
none?

HOG.

Not yet, lord; no.

MARC.

Have you hope of your freedom, then?

HOG.

No, lord, none: that would be heathen, to hope.
I feel inside like a pan of eels being boiled,
But never let it be thought I dared to hope.

MARC.

Who keeps your sties while you're here?

HOG.

My wife and son, sir.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

Then to-night will be anxious watching for you three
souls.

Well, come to me here to-morrow; if none has been lost
By then, you shall all be free, with something beside.

HOG.

Thank you, my King.

MARC.

And, Kai, remember, my swincherds
Report directly to me, when their duty calls.

KAI.

Certainly, lord.

MARC.

Bedwyr, come; we must ride.

(He leads BEDWYR off.)

KAI *(to Hog)*.

Never you dare presume to come here again.

Whatever the King may say, you report to me,

Or I'll give you cause to repent.

(KAI goes.)

(TRISTAN comes down as Hog moves away.)

TRISTAN.

The trap has caught us unless I can warn the Queen.

What messenger can I send to stop her returning?

I have told them that I am ill; so I cannot go.

I dare not trust Marc's courtiers.

Perhaps this swineherd.

O swineherd!

HOG.

Sir.

TRISTAN.

Will you take a word to the Queen,

There in the forest, not to return to-night?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Hog.

That's a long way. I couldn't be back by midnight.

TRISTAN.

You shall have my horse.

Hog.

No, lord, no horse for me.

Better not show it was you who sent the message.

But going on foot takes time,

And I must be guarding the swine to-night, my lord.

TRISTAN.

No one will rob the sties.

Hog.

Yes, many might rob them.

The slaves might do it to spite me. Sir Kai might do it

So as to keep me a slave; and if I'm away,

There's only my wife and son, to watch.

TRISTAN.

I'll guard your sties to-night, if you'll take the message.

Hog.

You, lord?

TRISTAN.

Why not? Will you go, then?

Hog.

Yes, lord, I will.

I tell the Queen she's not to return to-night?

TRISTAN.

Not to return to-night, whatever happens.

Hog.

I will not fail you, my lord.

But you'll bear in mind

It's a deal to us to have freedom near . . .

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

I swear
I will guard your sties to the death. If I lose a hog,
I pledge my crown that I will buy you your freedom.
Now go, and for God's sake do not fail.

Hog.

Trust me, lord.
(Hog goes.)

TRISTAN.

Will he be there in time? Will he miss the Queen?
Marc goes a-hunting, does he? The quarry is warned.

CURTAIN.

(*The front stage.*)

ARTHUR.

Have you not hunted, Bedwyr?

BEDWYR.

Marc bade us return;
But he, meanwhile, has ridden to join the Queen.
The trap that was planned is not to be set.

ARTHUR.

I am glad that he scorned this trap: it was unworthy.

KAI.

It is not unworthy to watch over Cornwall's peace;
And I tell you, Arthur, what I have since discovered.
Tristan had word of the plot: someone betrayed it.
He has sent that swineherd to tell the Queen not to come.

BEDWYR.

No, truly?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

He has. And now, in the swineherd's absence,
Tristan, this King's son, Cornwall's nephew, our saviour,
Has gone to the sties and taken the swineherd's place.
He, the Queen's lover, is guarding pigs, while the herd,
Who is the King's servant, goes warning the Queen.

ARTHUR.

It is true he is guarding the sties, for I saw him there.

KAI.

Now let us teach both him and the swineherd a lesson.
Let us take his swine from under his nose to-night,
Ruin this swineherd's prospects of liberty
Which he plainly cannot deserve, and make this Tristan
Such a laughing-stock as will force him out of Cornwall.

BEDWYN.

Raiding the swineyard would be a pleasant frolic.
I will make one.

KAI.

And Arthur?

ARTHUR.

This is no frolic.
Tristan is dangerous with a spear in his hand.

KAI.

Dangerous? Grown men's wits are sharper than spears.

BEDWYN.

How do you plan to outwit him?

KAI.

I, in disguise
As an old, old man, will wheedle him from the sties;
Then you and Arthur shall carry away a hog.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BEDWYR.

And suppose you fail?

KAI.

I imitate old, old men

So that I cannot fail.

ARTHUR.

No, Kai will not fail.

But Tristan may not be wheedled.

KAI.

Then Bedwyr may try.

ARTHUR.

What will you do, Bedwyr, to outwit Tristan?

BEDWYR.

I will go to Tristan and say, "I'm the swineherd's brother,
Come to relieve your guard." I will take his place;
And when I have taken his place, you may take the
swine.

ARTHUR.

Tristan may be less trusting than you suppose.

BEDWYR.

I imitate country-folk to the very life.

KAI.

That is true: he imitates country-people well.

BEDWYR.

What will you do, Arthur, if Kai and myself should fail?

ARTHUR.

In that unlikely chance, I should say "Attack."
Make an assault together. Three against one
Should make us masters at least of a virgin sow.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

We might try that, if the other attempts should fail.
But they will not fail.

ARTHUR.

I do not think that they will.
Wait. If the night-guard hear us thieves at the pigsties
And come to the rescue and capture us red-handed,
We may be hanged at the nearest tree.

KAI.

What nonsense!
The guard will know the King's steward, and the King's
bailly,
And the Captain of the Host. We will start from here,
then,
An hour before first cockcrow?

ARTHUR.

Agreed.

BEDWYR.

So be it.

KAI.

Since we rise so early, Bedwyr, we'll get to bed.

(KAI and BEDWYR go out.)

ARTHUR.

Deliver us from old men who are old women!
And here is Tristan.

(TRISTAN enters.)

And why in such hurry, my Prince?

TRISTAN.

I'm guarding the sties to-night, and I need a knife—
A broad sharp knife for a stab, instead of a spear.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ARTHUR.

Take mine, my Prince; so you work for the swineherd's freedom.

TRISTAN.

Yes, I take part. Will you come, too?

ARTHUR.

No, I cannot.

TRISTAN.

Why not? Do come.

ARTHUR.

Do you think that you need my help?

TRISTAN.

One never knows in these moonless nights of the spring.

ARTHUR.

True: but to-night I have work to do with some friends.
Are you going back to your kingdom soon?

TRISTAN.

Not soon.

ARTHUR.

Your father was on my staff in the Pentland war.
I stayed with him there: you inherit a goodly realm.

TRISTAN.

It is a fair land.

ARTHUR.

Why not go to it, Tristan?

TRISTAN.

Men can only play one game at a time, Lord Arthur.

ARTHUR.

Only one dangerous game.

But you must to stay . . .

"Look out before cockcrow" was your father's proverb.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

I'll see that the night guard march that way. Good-night.

(ARTHUR goes.)

TRISTAN.

Something is plotted against me: that was a hint.
I will "look out before cockcrow": I do not fear them.

(He goes off.)

(Half a minute's interval.)

(Full stage.)

The swineyard on the left of the stage, of wattled hurdles.

TRISTAN.

She got the message, thank heaven; I ruined their trap.
I wish the swineherd would come,
For this is a lonely watch on a night so dark.

(He hums) When Uther lifts his one stone pin
To drink at the brook below the whin,
Down in the hold
You will see gold,

But be quick, boys, quick, or tombstone.

I wish that I had a dog: someone is coming . . .
Someone is coming, a light foot: is it the Queen?
No; it's a man, and sobbing. Halt there! Who are you?

KAI (*disguised*).

For the love of God, sir, mercy! Are you a robber?

TRISTAN.

Robber, sir? No, the swineherd. Stand where you are.
Who are you? Hold up your hands. What are you doing
here?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

For the love of God, sir, help me to save my daughter.
We've been set upon by robbers. Oh, I am faint!
They burst in a cloud upon us. You heard us scream?
My daughter cried: "Run, fetch the swineherd, father!"
So, sir, I ran. Oh, sir, I am faint. Come swiftly.
My delicate daughter, prey to ruffianly men,
And she a cripple since birth and not quite sane,
Like her poor mother now at peace in the madhouse.
Come, my good sir. Oh, Christian swineherd, or pagan,
There, you can hear her screaming. Oh, come, sir, hurry!

TRISTAN.

Hurry! But hurry where? Where is your daughter?

KAI.

At the little copse in the dip, there, down the road.

TRISTAN.

Strange that I heard no scream.

KAI.

The wind was against it
And they choked the screams with a gag.

TRISTAN.

Run back to her.
I will call my mates, who are dozing here while I watch.
Shout as you go.

(KAI runs off, shouting.)

(KAI returns at once.)

KAI.

Alas, sir, lost, lost, lost! Good Christian swineherd,
You ought to have come at once when first I called.

TRISTAN.

Is your girl killed?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

Worse than killed; taken away.

Taken by ruthless ruffians in her beauty
To guilty splendour in a kitchen of thieves.
Pity a father's tears; an old man's weakness.
Feel my heart beating, like a dying bird waggling.

TRISTAN.

Run to Tintagel and borrow the King's bloodhound.

KAI.

Run? An old man like me. If you'd a mother,
For her sake, run.

TRISTAN.

I am sworn not to leave the swine.

KAI.

Then alas for a lonely old age walking the roads;
No daughter by my side, no filial prattle
Cheering the long tramp; ah! and no woman's hand
Lighting the fire of twigs to cook the supper.
O desolate old age!

TRISTAN.

You wander the roads then?

KAI.

A ballad-singer, sir.

TRISTAN.

Oh? Sing me a ballad.

KAI.

I am too broken with grief.

TRISTAN.

Say me one, then.

KAI.

I can say nothing but woe and alas my daughter!

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

Were you camped when the robbers came?

KAI.

No, sir, on foot.

TRISTAN.

Had you walked all night?

KAI.

All night and the day before,
Thirty long miles through Cornish bog in the rain.

TRISTAN.

Thirty long miles through bog in the rain! You lie, man.
Your shoes are as clean as a courtier's; not even dusty.
As for your daughter and robbers, they don't exist.
A nightingale was singing there in the copse
When first you brought the alarm. Get home to your
daughter,
This cripple from birth who walks thirty long miles.
Be off!

KAI.

Then you don't believe me?

TRISTAN.

I don't.

KAI.

King Marc

Shall know who keeps his swine; he shall know the truth.
Then we shall see.

TRISTAN.

That will be interesting.

KAI.

And the world will see.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

That will be clever of it.

KAI.

And King Marc will see what all of us see already.

(KAI goes.)

TRISTAN.

Which of the courtiers was it? It was likest Kai.

But I have not done with them yet. Who is that there?

Halt!

(BEDWYN enters.)

TRISTAN.

Explain yourself.

BEDWYN.

Be that you zwincherd?

TRISTAN.

Who are you?

BEDWYN.

Old zwincherd's brother Pig, sent by old zwincherd.

TRISTAN.

I didn't know he had a brother. Where from, you?

BEDWYN.

I be Queen's pigkeeper, out by her zummer palace.

Hog come to me to-night when he'd talkt with the Queen;

Hog said "I've cut my foot; I'll be late reaching sty;

Get you back, brother," he said, "and help young master."

TRISTAN.

But Hog is coming? How soon can he be here?

BEDWYN.

Dawn,

Or maybe an hour after. Anyone been here?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

Nobody.

BEDWYR.

No? Then it was birds or the pigs.
I could be sworn I heard voices; an old man's voice.
But indeed all be still as a stound: no robbers and nowt.
Why, all be at peace and morning will be in a bit.
All's zafe as a church. I'll watch; you lie and be easy.
No need for two to be up. If a robber should come,
I'd give 'ee a call: you could be up in a trice.
Do'ee lie down, my young master, and sleep while I
guard.

TRISTAN.

No. Since you said you heard voices, the thieves may be
near.

BEDWYR.

I think it was just the hogs grunting, or owls eating mice.

TRISTAN.

It's better be certain than sorry: we both will stand
guard.

How is your brother's hip?

BEDWYR.

Which brother's?

TRISTAN.

Hog's.

BEDWYR.

Ah, Hog's!

His hip: yes.

TRISTAN.

Didn't he mention it?

BEDWYR.

Not this time.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

You knew about it, of course?

BEDWYR.

Oh yes, indeed, yes.

All that he cared to tell.

TRISTAN.

He made no secret of't,
He gloried in't to me, for a hip like that
Not many men have; you haven't one, nor have I.

BEDWYR.

Why, no: thank heaven.

TRISTAN.

It's nothing to thank heaven for.
Many would give one hand for a hip like that.
That was an odd case of Hog's wife's brother's wife?

BEDWYR.

Ah, very odd!

TRISTAN.

It looked suspicious to me, Pig,
I don't know how it struck you, but I said and say
I shouldn't have liked the case to happen to me.

BEDWYR.

Being out with the Queen's swine at the summer palace,
I may not have heard the truth of all that story.

TRISTAN.

Why, it was there that it happened; you must have heard
it.

BEDWYR.

I heard it: yes, but I believe only half
The things that I see, and nothing of what I hear.
Hog said I wasn't to let 'ee watch. Lie down, man,
Sleep while 'ee can: to bed.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

I enjoy our talking.
That's a pretty girl, Hog's daughter; with pretty hair.
Would you call the air red-gold, or a copper-bronze?

BEDWYR.

That's a hard question: I'd call it a sort of wryneck
Wryneck or partridge mottle.

TRISTAN.

Do you think the lad
Who is always with her, means to marry her?

BEDWYR.

Yes.

TRISTAN.

What? Out of his mind as he is?

BEDWYR.

I'm talking of Cadur.

TRISTAN.

I'm not. I am talking of one who doesn't exist.
There is neither lad nor daughter, nor wife's brother's
wife,
Nor hip; nor has Hog a brother, nor are you swineherd.
You are a courtier; I knew you from the first.
Out of it, Arthur: away!

BEDWYR.

I am not Arthur.

TRISTAN.

Then whoever you are, be off. Take that direction,
And make no signals.

BEDWYR.

All right, I'll go: good night.
You won't have long to wait ere you see us again.

(BEDWYR goes.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

I have not done with these knaves; worse is to follow.
Now is the time for a raid, now the East grows grey.
Here one comes creeping—or is it an old dog-wolf?
Halt, there, or I strike! Stand!

Hog.

Hist, young master, it's Hog.

TRISTAN.

Let me be sure: open your hands; so. Welcome.

Hog.

Have they been raiding, master?

TRISTAN.

They are all about.
Two, and their mates are coming; now is the hour.

Hog.

I knew they'd come, so I've brought my son and my wife.
Come in, my Sowkin and Pigling.

(They come in.)

TRISTAN.

You are both most welcome.

SOWKIN.

Good morning, sir, and our thanks for your kind watching.

PIGLING.

I hope you'll find some use for my holly ballow.

TRISTAN.

You come in the nick of time. They'll be here in a minute.

Hog.

Well, sir, we're four; I say "Get into the pigsty,
In with the pigs": then, if they come to steal pigs,
They'll be into our clutch before they know we are there.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

SOWKIN.

Trust to my Hog, sweet sir, he's a King at this game.

TRISTAN.

In with the pigs, then. Give me your hand, good madam.

SOWKIN.

Thank you, kind sir; that's it. And don't be afeared, sir,
The hogs won't hurt 'ee, and though they smell a bit
flighty,

It's good for the lungs if you breathe it deep in down.

PIGLING.

How about that supper, mother?

SOWKIN.

First make all snug.

TRISTAN.

Come along, Hog.

Hog.

That's that. Now, Pigling, my son.

SOWKIN.

Now we'll all sit out of the wind and eat our supper.

That's cheek in that, and this is cider in this.

(They settle to supper.)

(Enter ARTHUR, KAI, BEDWYR.)

ARTHUR.

So you have not thriven? How came it that you failed,
Kai?

KAI.

The ruffian was suspicious and most astute.

BEDWYR.

I did not see round his questions; he trapped me fairly.

ARTHUR.

What shall I do, then?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

These are the pigsties, Arthur . . .
He is not here . . . he has gone. Look yonder, Bedwyr.

BEDWYR.

No, there is no guard here.

KAI.

O treacherous peachick!
Is that not like one of these sprigs of to-day?
Take a poor swineherd's place and then break faith with
him.

He has gone to his doxy, or else to his bed of ease,
Leaving the swineherd's freedom to shift for itself.

ARTHUR.

What shall we do; climb over and take a hog?
Or pull a gap in the paling and drive them out?

BEDWYR.

I should say drive them; but what is it Kai most wants?

KAI.

To bring this whipper-snapper into disgrace.

ARTHUR.

Pull down the pales, then, and the herd will be ours.

KAI.

The herd is the King's, Arthur; so are these palings.
I as the steward will act here for the King.
I will not risk the loss of a hundred hogs:
We will step inside the pen and choose one hog,
Evidence to King Marc of his swineherd's slackness
And of Tristan's want of faith.

We will take this hog,
Call King Marc from his bed and hand it to him,
Saying "Thus do domestic traitors guard your swine."

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ARTHUR.

You are very bitter about this young man, Kai.

KAI.

Medicines are bitter. I will be first to lay hand
Upon a pig.

ARTHUR.

Have you had much dealing with pigs?

KAI.

No; but I'm competent to handle a pig.

ARTHUR.

A pig is a big strong beast.

BEDWYR.

But only at first.

They tire at once; shut up like this they are fat.

ARTHUR.

You have dealt with pigs, then, Bedwyr?

BEDWYR.

Once at the Fair
I wrestled a pig at the good old Cornish game
Of putting a pig into pen: and I put him in.

ARTHUR.

Then you and Kai are designed to capture him now;
I will stand outside the pen and help as I can.

KAI.

Come on then, Bedwyr; Arthur shall hold our clothes.
There is my cloak; my cap; my tunic; no, strip, man,
Keep our things clean: we shall go from here to the King.

BEDWYR.

True. I'd forgotten that. Well, there is my tunic.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ARTHUR.

You cannot enter the swine pen in those shoes;
Take off your under things: that's better, much better,
Now are you like those heroes, whoever they were,
Who wrestled the what's-its-name in the how-d'yc-call-
it.

BEDWYR.

Won't you strip, Arthur?

ARTHUR.

No, for I am the guard.
If Tristan should reappear or the swineherd come,
You will need defence; but the coast is clear; are you
ready?

BEDWYR.

Take a cruise round, Arthur; I doubt that the coast is
clear.

(ARTHUR goes.)

KAI.

No need for Arthur to go.

BEDWYR.

It is safer so,
For these young devils, like Tristan, are full of tricks.

KAI.

Where on earth has Arthur gone? We shall catch our
deaths.
We might have caught twenty hogs and have gone by
this time.

BEDWYR.

He has just gone to the pen's end to make certain.

KAI.

I am not going to freeze to death in my shirt
While Arthur looks at the moon. I am going in,
Into the pen. Come, give me a leg over.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BEDWYR.

There you are, then. What is inside? Can you see at all?

KAI.

It is all safe. Come over, Bedwyr, I'll help you.

BEDWYR.

Where are the pigs sleeping?

KAI.

In the corner yonder.

BEDWYR.

Whercabouts, Kai? I do not see them.

KAI.

Be quiet!

They are sound asleep: we must do as the lion does,

Leap upon one, before the rest are awake.

Those dark masses below the pales are the pigs.

BEDWYR.

I see them now. Spit on your hands, Kai.

KAI.

The big one,

The fat hog nearest the wall, that is our quarry.

BEDWYR.

Come on: not another word.

* * * *

HOG.

I'll learn 'ec steal King's hogs!

SOWKIN.

Down with un, husband!

PIGLING.

Ballow onc, and ballow two, and ballow dree!

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BEDWYR.

O I am killed! . . .

TRISTAN.

One of them's down!

FIGLING.

Hold to him, mother, until I give him ballow.

SOWKIN.

Quick, son, he's slippery as an eel in sin.

FIGLING.

I'll slippery him with ballow; ballow 'ee Bong.

KAI.

Alas, alas, my country!

SOWKIN.

Here comes another.

Get your sling, Figling, and blast him like Goliath.

FIGLING (*opening the pen and coming out*).

No, mother, it's someone running. Well might he run!

TRISTAN.

There were only two, then?

HOG.

Two. Here they are, both corpses.

KAI.

Oh, water, water! cold water!

BEDWYR.

My neck is broken!

FIGLING.

It hasn't been broken yet; you haven't been tried yet.

He's wandering: mother, he thinks he's hanged already.

BEDWYR.

I'm one of the King's household.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

So am I.

BEDWYR.

We both

Are knights of King Marc's court: eminent courtiers.

SOWKIN.

Look at this raiment here. Courtiers indeed!
Not courtiers; robbers, who robbed all these fine clothes.

HOG.

And thought to rob his sacred Kingship's hogs.
And might have, too, but for unprospering pride.

BEDWYR.

We are not robbers.

HOG.

You are. We heard your words;
You meant to take the fat hog nearest the wall.

BEDWYR.

Take us before the King.

PIGLING.

We'll take you to him

As soon as it is light: then, cord to the windpipe,
To save your wives the expense of cooking breakfast.

KAI.

I tell you, lout, I am Kai, the King's steward.

HOG.

Now, quiet, quiet; remember your latter end;
Don't take the name of the Lord in vain.

(A horn is heard.)

TRISTAN.

A hunting horn!

King Marc is coming a-hunting: here is the King.

(Enter MARC, with ARTHUR.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

I come to ask if a hog were lost this night.
But what and who are these?

TRISTAN.

They are thieves, King Marc,
Caught in the pen red-handed a moment since.

MARC.

And what brings you here, Tristan?

TRISTAN.

I came to help guard,
So that your swincherd might save his hogs to the end.

MARC.

Bring the two thieves before me. What plea can you
urge
That you be not hanged at once?

KAI.

My lord, I am Kai.

BEDWYR.

And I am Bedwyr, the Knight.

MARC.

Bedwyr and Kai!
What brought you into the swine-pen?

KAI.

We saw no guards . . .
We got into the pen to defend the herd;
Then all these set upon us before we could speak.

MARC.

But why get into the pen to defend the herd?
Defend them from whom? What brought you here in the
first place?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

SOWKIN.

He came to take the fat hog nearest the wall;
We heard him say so. But that fat hog was my husband.
He wasn't a wise choice.

MARC.

Did you want a pig, Kai?

KAI.

No, not to steal; but we heard that Prince Tristan here
Was guarding the pen, and we thought that to take a pig
From him would be held good fun.

MARC.

But the very thought
Of taking a King's pig, why, it is treason, Kai.
You, as my steward, surely know that?

KAI.

My master,
We would have spilled our bloods to the last to defend
Your swine from any but Tristan.

MARC.

Do not say Tristan, nor even Prince Tristan, steward;
He is a King.

KAI.

I had not heard he was crowned King Tristan, lord.

MARC.

It is a serious matter
When stewards and knights break laws, even in game.
You have been hurt.

PIGLING.

I gave them a palt with ballow.

KAI.

I am cold from my wound, lord; may I put on my clothes?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

Why did you take them off? It is Cornish law
That any man taking a thief may have his gear.
These clothes are Hog's and Pigling's; take them, they're
yours.

And, Hog, I give you your freedom and rank you here
My master swineherd.

Be off, you two, to the castle;
Quick, ere the women be up to see you pass.

(KAI and BEDWYR go.)

Arthur, go with them: fetch them a couple of cloaks.
You swineherds, move from earshot a little space.

(*They move off.*)

Nephew, there is much talk, which I never heeded;
Now there is much ill-blood which I have to heed.
I cannot have my courtiers poisoned with rage
By you, who have no place here.

I have been too tolerant.
Your Kingdom cries for your rule.

TRISTAN.

I say, let it cry.

MARC.

It shall not cry in vain while Cornwall demands
That you be gone from Tintagel. Therefore, my nephew,
I order you to take ship and leave this Kingdom.

TRISTAN.

Order me to leave Cornwall!

MARC.

Order you strictly.
Banish you, if you choose, on pain of slaying
By the first man who meets you: go before noon.

TRISTAN.

You drive me out; you dare; drive me, who killed
Kolbein!

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Why, uncle, you are King because of this hand!

(ARTHUR enters.)

MARC.

Arthur has orders from me to see you aboard.

ARTHUR.

Come, Tristan, I have a sword and you but a knife.

There are twenty spearmen here.

Must I call them, Tristan?

(TRISTAN goes with him.)

CURTAIN.

(Half-minute's interval.)

(Full stage. Tintagel.)

MARC.

You asked for Tristan. I said that he is not here.

That was not the whole truth, Isolt; I sent him hence;

Banished him hence, on pain of slaying, in short.

He has sailed to the north, never to come back here.

ISOLT.

May I know your reasons for forcing him hence thus?

MARC.

Yes. His own good first, since his kingdom needed him.

Then, since this folly of Bedwyr, Kai and the swineherd,

I would not have him in Cornwall: so he has gone.

ISOLT.

He was my friend, King Marc; he wooed me to Cornwall

Ere ever I looked on you; could you not wait

Until I had said farewell to my banished friend?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

Isolt, I wished him away before you returned;
Evil tongues bracket your names together in gossip.
Such talk must cease.

ISOLT.

Is a Queen to be ruled by talk?

MARC.

Yes, madam; yes, if she will not rule herself.
Tristan, a King, was keeping the swine while he sent
The man with a message to you. I am ashamed
That a friend of yours should have so little esteem
For you, as the Queen, as to send the swineherd to you,
Whatever the message was, which I do not ask.
Filthy, no doubt, having such a messenger.

ISOLT.

It was not filthy: it was a love message.

MARC.

Love message! Do you dare say it?

ISOLT.

I do dare.

It was a message of love from a man who loves me,
Warning me of a trap for the Queen of Cornwall
Set by her loving husband at his Knight's bidding.

MARC.

Now I will ask a question I meant to spare.
Why did he send the swineherd? Had you intended
To meet last night, if I were away?

ISOLT.

Yes, we had.

MARC.

You have met before, in secret?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

Ask your court spies.

MARC.

I ask my wife, beautiful Isolt, my wife,
Who pledged me her troth last week, the love of my soul.
Ah, my beloved, whatever the young man is,
Let it not weigh with a husband's love: I love you
More than a boy can. And we are married. Besides,
I have heard it said that often, when people marry,
In the first days they shrink from each other. It's true.
So he seems much to you?

ISOLT.

There is no question of "seems."

MARC.

Love is a blindness full of seeming, my Isolt.

ISOLT.

There is no seeming in my love and no blindness.
Nothing else is, or matters, or means, save this.
And against this shaking and transfiguration, you
Plot with a steward and lie to ensnare the Queen.

MARC.

That passionate sin is done. You are married to me,
And I love you so that I will permit no rival.

ISOLT.

I love him so that I am all his, to the spirit.

MARC.

Keep him from Cornwall, then: he dies if he come here.
You are my wife till you die.
Love me or not, I will not share you, believe me.

(MARC goes.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

How was the secret known? Which courtier learned it?
What did we do to betray it? Or was it Brangwen?
Brangwen alone knew all, and the King knows all.

(BRANGWEN enters.)

ISOLT.

Brangwen, come here to me. Have you betrayed me?

BRANGWEN.

God forbid, mistress.

ISOLT.

You lie; you have told the King.

BRANGWEN.

O Queen, I had rather die than tell of my shame.

ISOLT.

You have loved King Marc since you pledged him in the
wine.

BRANGWEN.

That is true, madam; may God forgive me the sin.

ISOLT.

You have told him all, hoping to win his favour.

BRANGWEN.

Sweet mistress, do not kill me. I swear to heaven
That I have not breathed a word. Only this hour
Marc's men took me and threatened me with their
swords;

Said they would kill me if I would not accuse you.

I said "that you harboured me, who am spotted and
base,"

That that was the only fault you had, sweet mistress.

That is the only betrayal I have betrayed.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

Marc's men? Which? Bedwyr and Kai?

BRANGWEN.

Yes, and others;

With swords at my throat swearing I hid your love.

ISOLT.

Who has betrayed me, Brangwen, if not you? Traitorress,
It was you!

BRANGWEN.

Madam, it was not: this I can prove.

ISOLT.

Prove it then, swiftly.

BRANGWEN.

Queen, at this very moment
Tristan is there in the glen. I have not betrayed him.

ISOLT.

Here, with a price on his head?

BRANGWEN.

Disguised as a harper.
He is in a hut by the brook; he sent me to you
To say he will clamber the rocks up to your window,
Now, or some minutes hence.

ISOLT.

O my God, as we talk
He may be there! O girl, forgive my suspicion,
I know not where I am led.

BRANGWEN.

Sweet mistress, my lady,
I will deck you for him and make you fair for your love.

(They go upstairs.)
(MARC and KAI enter.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

You say he is here, dressed as a harper?

KAI.

And plans
To enter the Queen's room, clambering up the rocks.
I heard him telling the maid.

MARC.

He shall die, if taken.

KAI.

After my humbling the other day I am loath
To labour with zeal for the King; but to get proof
I have laid rye-meal upon the rocks and earth
Under Queen Isolt's window, and in her room
From the floor beneath the window up to her bed.
If a man step in the flour, his track will show.
It will be dark; he will not notice the meal.

MARC.

How soon will he come?

KAI.

At once: even now, my King.
You will hear him come, for Queen Isolt's window hinge
Is rusty and creaks.

(Enter BEDWYR.)

I posted Bedwyr to watch.

BEDWYR.

The harper went to the rocks by the Queen's window;
He started to climb up.

KAI.

Listen.

MARC.

That was no hinge.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

KAI.

Tapping with finger-tips; she is going to open.
There is the window, my lord.

BEDWYR.

He is wearing a sword.

MARC.

Call Arthur hither.

(*BEDWYR goes to fetch ARTHUR.*)

That it should be my wife and nephew who wrong me,
Those nearest to me, my sister's son and my heir!

KAI.

It is always the nearest who deal the cruellest blows.
Here is Arthur, my lord.

(*ARTHUR and BEDWYR enter.*)

MARC.

Tell him; I cannot, Kai.

KAI.

Arthur, it is thought that the banished Tristan is here
Now, with the Queen, in her room.

BEDWYR.

He is in the room;

My guard saw him clamber up and tap at the window,
And the window opened and white arms helped him in.

KAI.

He is with the Queen at this moment and we shall take
him.

ARTHUR.

Why am I bidden to this assembly, King Marc?

MARC.

Because if I take my Queen, as I fear, I wish
To put her to trial before you.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ARTIUR.

You, as the King,

Are the law, not we.

Kai.

We will bear witness, Arthur.

Shall we proceed, King Marc; bid the Queen open?

BEDWYR.

My guard are ready with spears below the window;

He cannot escape as he came.

MARC.

Summon the Queen.

Bid her to open her door that her room be searched.

ARTIUR.

One moment, Marc. I am bidden here as accomplice

To the trapping of a woman, a Queen, my hostess.

I take no part in a trap. Therefore: Take heed, you!

Danger! a trap is set! danger! Look out! Look out!

Here come King Marc and his men to murder you!

(He raises a loud alarm.)

KAI.

You devil, Arthur, to give them warning! Be silent.

(He knocks at the door.)

Is the Queen within? King Marc bids Queen Isolt open!

If the Queen be there, let her answer the King's

summons.

Isolt.

Who is there, calling the Queen?

Kai.

It is I, Sir Kai,

Charged by the King to bid you open this door.

Will you open, or else compel us to use force?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

These are strange words to use to the Queen, steward.
Go tell King Marc, "I will open to none but him."

KAI.

King Marc, she says "she will open to none but you."

MARC.

Wait, then, until I come.

(MARC goes to the upper door.)

Open, I command you.

(She opens.)

ISOLT.

Why do you rouse me thus in the dead of night?

MARC.

Because I must search your room. Light candles,
Bedwyr.

There at the brazier.

ISOLT.

Why do you bring your soldiers
Thus to my room, to search? What think you to find?

MARC.

If you know not, madam, I know not and will atone.
Thrust through the curtains, Bedwyr; look in the corner.

KAI.

King Marc, will you take this light and see for yourself
The footprints marked in the meal. Did you see, my lord?

MARC.

I have seen with my own eyes.

KAI.

Bedwyr's watchers
No doubt will have caught him as he tried to escape.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

Madam, I ask you to have the goodness to cloak
And join me there in the hall: I would speak with you.

(ARTIUR, KAI, BEDWYR, MARC, *in the hall*.)

Did your watchers kill him, Bedwyr?

BEDWYR.

No. lord; they failed.

In the dark, he leaped among them, laid Corvus dead
And so escaped in the dark, none can say where.

MARC.

Corvus, my guard, laid dead! You, Kai, and Bedwyr, saw
The footprints marked on the floor in the Queen's room?
No need to speak; you saw it and therefore know.

ARTIUR.

This is no quarrel of mine, but I ask to remain,
Lest one, my hostess the Queen, should need a friend.

(*Enter ISOLT.*)

MARC.

Sit you down there, madam; I have something to say.

(*ISOLT sits.*)

A man was watched to your window and seen to enter.
The marks of his feet are plain on your room floor.
But that alarm was given, we should have caught him
In your room with you. You are the Queen of Cornwall,
Quit of the forms of law, but bound to a choice.
Either you shall declare what man was with you,
Or drink the water of test to prove your innocence.

ISOLT.

Dismiss these men from the presence: is it not enough
That you bring them into my room in the dead of night
But that you, the King, must arraign the Queen before
them?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

I bring three witnesses as the law prescribes.
What man was with you?

ISOLT.

A man who came in and went.
Being dark, I could not see his face: the flour
Wastefully spilled by your steward on the floor
Will show his footprints.

MARC.

You expected him, you knew him;
Who was he?

ISOLT.

Nay, your steward expected him,
You and this bevy of knights expected him;
I should ask you: Who was he?

MARC.

God's passion and death!

ISOLT.

Will you repeat? I could not distinguish the name.

ARTHUR.

Beautiful Queen, and you, King Marc, may I speak?
Life will have to be lived when this is settled.
Do not make life more hard by bitterness now.
Marc, may I counsel the Queen apart one moment?

MARC.

Yes, if she care to hear.

ISOLT.

I will gladly hear him.

(MARC, KAI, BEDWYR go up stage. ARTHUR and ISOLT
come down.)

Did Tristan escape when he leapt from the window, then?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ARTHUR.

Yes; he killed Corvus and got away unwounded.

ISOLT.

I thank you, Arthur, for giving me the alarm.

ARTHUR.

I do not care for trappings: but now to peace.
Cannot this trouble be mended, or ended, lady?

ISOLT.

Mended? I am as may-blossom in a flood,
Or a straw in flames; when the flood has run to sea
And the flames burnt out, I may be mended or ended.
What is this water of test?

ARTHUR.

A drink of ordeal.

ISOLT.

Poison?

ARTHUR.

The innocent drink it without harm.

ISOLT.

What chance is there of Tristan reaching his ship?

ARTHUR.

No great chance, madam.

ISOLT.

Has he any?

ARTHUR.

Not much:

They are beating the countryside with a hundred men.

ISOLT.

Thank you, good Arthur. I have been blest this night:
I have had a lover and found a friend, a true one.
May the gods bless you, Arthur.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ARTHUR.

You, too, Queen Isolt.

ISOLT.

Tell them that I will drink this poisonous brew

ARTHUR.

The Queen does me the honour to bid me say
That she will drink your water of test, King Marc.

MARC.

I am thankful that she, being innocent, accepts
To drink this drug, which the guilty dare not drink.
Truth, which mortals may hide, is revealed by the gods.

ISOLT.

It is safer to be in God's hand than in man's.

MARC.

Bring me the flask from the casket in the aumbry
On the gospel side of the altar in the chapel.

(BEDWYR goes.)

ISOLT.

Poison like this is a useful drug to a husband,
He can murder his wife, yet lay the blame upon her.

KAI.

None but the guilty are poisoned by it, Queen Isolt.

ISOLT.

Have all you innocents drunk it?

MARC.

It is your privilege,

Should you desire, to see a priest ere you drink.

ISOLT.

The drink will shrive me enough; let the priest sleep.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

(Sings.)

A ship came west from the eastern kings,
With a cargo aboard of three good things:
She had gold to change and spice to sell,
And a beggar in rags with news to tell.

(BEDWYR enters.)

BEDWYR.

I have brought the flask and a cup, so please your grace.

MARC.

Hold the cup, Bedwyr. I call you all to witness
That the seal on the sacred flasket is unbroken.
I break the seal. Show that the cup is empty.

BEDWYR.

Bear witness, the cup is empty; a clean glass.

MARC.

I empty the hallowed water that shows the truth.
May this bright water declare your innocence.
Take the cup, Bedwyr; offer it to the Queen.

BEDWYR.

Madam, I offer the cup as the King bids.

ISOLT.

I am your Queen, fellow: offer it on your knees.

BEDWYR.

I offer it on my knees.

ISOLT.

I take it from you.

This cold, bright poison, like to my husband's love,
Will soon declare the truth; no, I will declare it.
I am Tristan's queen, not Marc's: I was Tristan's love
Before ever I saw King Marc: I am Tristan's now.
I drink to the setting free of the soul within me,
That it may follow my love, my Tristan slain.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

(*TRISTAN enters.*)

TRISTAN.

I am not slain yet. Fling down that poison, Isolt.
See there, it burns like quicklime: and you stood by
Making this lady, your Queen, drink of this death!
Here is one for you, my poisoner, one for you!
Come with me, Isolt.

BEDWYR.

Come all you King's men, help!

KAI.

Come, rescue, help! Tristan has seized Queen Isolt.

MARC.

Stand back, Bedwyr and Kai. Tristan, hark to me.
Your godless and lawless path leads to destruction.

TRISTAN.

Your godly and lawful road was leading to murder.
Keep clear of me, I warn you: keep your men clear.
I have horses below and I am going with Isolt,
And the man who tries to stop me shall die on the spot.

ISOLT.

I am going with Tristan; he is my lover; I, his.
This is your Cornish crown; this, your Queen's wedding
ring.
I go with my lover to a den in the forest,
Or a wet rock by a brook, or a tilted deck,
And the infamy of the world; and I go with joy.

(*They go out together.*)

CURTAIN.

(*Three minutes' interval.*)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

(Full stage. The forest, near the Alan.)

DINAN.

My lord and master, your subjects send me to beg
That you leave this living here in the wood with your
friend

And come to your kingdom at once.

TRISTAN.

And I reply:

Will they take the queen of my choice?

DINAN.

No, my prince, no.

They ask you to leave this lady, since we in the North
Demand an unspotted queen.

TRISTAN.

Then inform my subjects
That I am filled with beautiful thoughts, and will not
Trouble my joy with a realm.

DINAN.

Son, they risked their lives,
And starved their bellies, to help you, for twenty years.

TRISTAN.

Then say I will come in a little while: not yet.

DINAN.

But the heathen are pressing in with fire and sword:
We ask for our King to lead our host to the war.

TRISTAN.

War is an unreal thing to a man who has love.

DINAN.

It is not an unreal thing to your friends and comrades.
Hoel is killed, that you used to hunt with: and Ambrose,

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Your friend, little Ambrose, was captured and murdered
By heathen raiders: only last week.

TRISTAN.

What, Ambrose?

DINAN.

He was heard saying "You wait till Tristan returns."
He thought you would come.

TRISTAN.

And I have said that I will. . . .

And soon, when I choose.

DINAN.

Come now; there can be no "soon."

TRISTAN.

I, who am King, have stated my will: my subjects
Must wait, as I bid.

DINAN.

I am your subject, Tristan,
Only a subject; but your future and fame
Are dear to me as my blood. Fling off this fever,
This ruin and rot of an unchaste, forsworn trull.

TRISTAN.

Take back those words!

DINAN.

I will not, because they are true—
You know that they are.

TRISTAN.

That ends it, Dinan: now go.

DINAN.

Will you come to your realm?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

When I think it fitting.

DINAN.

But now?

TRISTAN.

No; I will not come now.

DINAN.

Then your subjects tell you,
Through me, that they cast you out from kingship and
kingdom,
And brand you traitor and choose another as king.
I have declared their bidding.
I'd have been wiser to have let Kolbein spear you
When you were a little baby.

Farewell, Tristan.

(He goes out.)

CURTAIN.

(No wait.)

(Front stage.)

(Enter MARC and ARTHUR.)

ARTHUR.

So, Marc, as I have said, the pagans have marched.
Will you come, with the Cornish army, to fight them with
me?

MARC.

I will muster my men at once: we can march forthwith.

ARTHUR.

With those and the Mendip men we shall beat them back.
But who comes here? It is Dinan, Prince Tristan's man.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

MARC.

You were promised death if you came to this land again.

DINAN.

You may kill me if you wish: here is my dagger.

MARC.

Where are your master traitor and mistress quean?

DINAN.

They are in hell, King Marc.

MARC.

You mean, they are dead?

DINAN.

They have not yet the luck to be dead; they linger.

MARC.

Do you serve them here?

DINAN.

I have no service with either.

ARTHUR.

Grant him your pardon, Marc; he may give you news.

MARC.

Here is your dagger, fellow: I shall not harm you,

No, nor those others; I am too sick at heart

To wish to make others as wretched as myself.

Only, you said that they are in hell . . . I would grieve

If I thought that they needed help.

DINAN.

They need the help of the gods; they are past men's help.

There is no peace for those two under the moon,

Nothing but horror of heart from their greatness ruined.

They live in a den by the brook, like the fox or otter.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

They dare not face the daylight: they hunt by night
And at dawn they sleep with a drawn sword laid between
them.

MARC.

Are you sure of that?

DINAN.

Yes, I will take my oath on it.
If you will swear to spare them, I'll show them to you.

MARC.

My sister's son and my wife; they are safe from me.

DINAN.

Are they safe from your men-at-arms?

MARC.

Yes, on my oath.

DINAN.

Come this way, then, King Marc: you shall see them.
Softly.

(They move off.)

(The curtains, opening the full stage, discover TRISTAN and ISOLT asleep, a sword between them. Enter MARC and DINAN.)

DINAN.

There are the two as I said. Are they not lovely?

MARC.

Ay, they are lovely. Leave me alone with them.

DINAN.

Step quietly, lest you wake him and he kill you.

MARC.

Our cups are not yet drunken, our three cold draughts.

(DINAN goes.)

Youth had to turn to youth, I was too old for her.
She is so beautiful, she would damn a saint.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

I could strike them dead; many would strike them dead.
Killing them will not bring me quiet again.
He is more of a man than I, my sister's son.
He would kill me, were I thus.

They are unhappy,
So Dinan says. They are happier than the King.
They shall see that I found them sleeping and pitied
them.

(He lays his glove between them.)

Lead me out of this, Dinan, back to Arthur.

(He goes out.)

ISOLT.

Yes? Who is there? Who goes there in the thicket?
Someone was here.

TRISTAN.

Where? When? There is no one, Isolt.
It was some bird or beast going by on the leaves.

ISOLT.

Someone stood looking down, with thought to kill us.

TRISTAN.

You have been dreaming.

ISOLT.

No; this was not a dream.
I knew it, but could not stir. Look! What is this glove?
Tristan, while we were sleeping, Marc has been here.
This is his glove.

TRISTAN.

It is true. That is the King's.
But had he been here, he would have killed us, surely . .

ISOLT.

It is not Marc's way, to kill.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

No, not by himself;
But he dropped this glove in his hurry to call his men.
He will be here with his knights to take us, Isolt.

ISOLT.

Tristan, he did not drop the glove in a hurry,
He laid it carefully on the hilt of the sword
To show that he might have killed us and did not kill.
He spared us.

TRISTAN.

I should have guarded while you slept.
We two must go upstream to the secret cave;
And start at once; we cannot trust to his mercy.

ISOLT.

I am not sure that I can go to the cave.

TRISTAN.

You must: it is not safe here.

ISOLT.

No; unsafe henceforth.
I am unsafe henceforth to you, my Tristan.

TRISTAN.

I welcome the risks you bring.

ISOLT.

That is not what I meant.
I meant that I have been harsh, he has been generous.
He has taken the ground from beneath my feet.

TRISTAN.

How so?

ISOLT.

I cannot forget this. Tristan, if you had been Marc,
And had seen us lying, would you have spared me?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

Yes.

ISOLT.

And my lover?

TRISTAN.

Yes, asleep. I'd have roused him and fought him.

ISOLT.

He is greater than we two, Tristan.

TRISTAN.

He plotted

With Kai, to trap you; he tried to poison you.

Had I been awake when he came, I'd have laid him dead.

ISOLT.

Yes, he risked that, too.

TRISTAN.

Yes, the first risk of his life.

ISOLT.

Sorrow has nobled him; he has done such a deed

As none but a great man could. Therefore I'll show him

That I see his greatness.

TRISTAN.

I've shown that I see his weakness.

I have not killed him: that is enough for Marc.

And now you are mine.

ISOLT.

I was till to-day: not now.

TRISTAN.

Isolt, where are you going?

ISOLT.

Back to Marc, barefoot.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

You shall not! What? to be pelted and put to death?

ISOLT.

Will my lover bar my way?

TRISTAN.

No. Let us use reason.

I see your mood. This living here in the wilds
Has been too hard for you; you want to go back
To a world of women and friends and fires and homes.
We will go to my kingdom.

ISOLT.

Your subjects have cast you out

TRISTAN.

We will go to Arthur, then.

ISOLT.

He has gone to the war.

TRISTAN.

Then we will go to your home.

ISOLT.

I have no home now.

TRISTAN.

Your mother's house is a home.

ISOLT.

Nevermore to me.

TRISTAN.

Because of me?

ISOLT.

Partly.

TRISTAN.

You could go there alone.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

I could not go there.

TRISTAN.

Why not?

ISOLT.

I should not dare.

This love, that I thought was great, is blindness and
greed

And I am unclean, unclean, till I drive some nail
Right through this passionate heart.

If he scourge me, well.

If he kill me, well; he shall have his chance and choice.

If he cast me out, I will come again, perhaps;

But until then, I am a thing.

TRISTAN.

So am I, Isolt.

A young thing, much in love, who saved you from death,
And flung his kingdom away for the love of you;
Weigh that with creeping in like a thief with a glove.

ISOLT.

Marc, who is cruelly hurt, is great in his pain.

TRISTAN.

Meaning that I am little?

ISOLT.

O Tristan, beloved,

See it as I do.

TRISTAN.

I cannot see it as you.

Either you have gone mad or you never loved me.

ISOLT.

Never loved you, Tristan? Do not let us be bitter.

We have trodden the depths, let us rise to the heights.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

By heights, meaning that you return to your husband?

ISOLT.

I'll pay a great deed with another.

TRISTAN.

Yes, raiment and women
Are what you want, not me, who am ruined for you.
Get to your Marc; and tell him I'll tear him piecemeal
If once he touch you. Go, get to your heights and
depths . . .
I'll follow deer, not women, henceforth, and stab them,
Stab them and stab them dead. Out! get to your
husband.

CURTAIN.

(No wait.)

(Front stage.)

(MARC and ARTHUR.)

ARTHUR.

We will march at dawn, then, Marc. We shall give them
battle

About full moon. I'll come with your horse at dawn.

MARC.

Till dawn, then, Arthur: good night.

ARTHUR.

Good night.

(ARTHUR goes. ISOLT enters.)

MARC.

Who are you, lady?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

I am Isolt, your wife, come to return your glove.
I say that I have sinned in act and in thought,
Broken all vows, all pacts, tricked you, betrayed you.
Now, toucht to loyalty by the greatness in you,
I stand ashamed by your generous deed, my King.
I come to atone, or to bear my punishment.

MARC.

Isolt, my queen, we have been harsh to each other.

ISOLT.

You do not know my worst.

MARC.

You have suffered from mine.
Let us put by the past; for I love you, Isolt,
More than words tell. I march to the wars at dawn.
The knights who poisoned your peace from hatred of you,
Have marched already: you have no enemies here;
None but dear lovers now. Go: robe you and crown you,
I will declare you the Queen and the ruler here
While I am east at the war.

ISOLT.

I will atone, Marc;

I promise. God bless you, lord.

MARC.

And you, too, Isolt.

I shall be home from the wars by the summer's end,
Please God, my Queen. Our life shall be different then.
Come, Queen of Cornwall.

(They go out.)

(Half-minute's interval.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

(The main stage. Tintagel.)

(Hog and Sowkin.)

Hog.

Our Qucen has kept great state since King Marc went
warring.

Sowkin.

She should not wear this black; King Marc isn't dead.

Hog.

She wears the black because King Marc is away.

Sowkin.

Many might say she wears the black for another.

Hog.

Now, Sowkin, now! whatever the other was,
He is not now. She has shut her doors upon him,
Turned her thoughts from him, and all is for King Marc.

Sowkin.

The more's the pity, I say, for our poor daughter.
She thinks of nothing but this Prince Tristan in sorrow.
Run mad in the woods, they say.

Hog.

He is crazed from love,
And our girl Pixne is right to be sorry for him;
But for his friendship we wouldn't be free to-day.

Sowkin.

Set free. Ah, husband, many a time and oft
I'd have given much to be back among the swine;
It was so homely among those dear kind creatures;
They weren't like courtiers: they loved you for what you
were.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Hog.

The Queen says, after the war we're to be rangers;
Which means I'll have a horse and a red stomach-piece,
And you'll be mistress ranger and carry keys.
Think of that! carry keys on a dingle-dangle.

SOWKIN.

I hope these glories will not turn us from truths.
I fear for you, my Hog, as I fear for Pixne.
You were always ones for the world.

When will the wars end?

Hog.

Here comes the Queen, our mistress; God save you, lady.

ISOLT.

You were asking about the war's end. There is news.
The Cornish men have come to the dyke with Arthur,
They expect to fight the heathen at once. Perhaps
They have already fought and ended the war.
We shall have more news during to-day, no doubt.
Tell Constans he must go with the horses to-night.

Hog.

He shall be told, O Queen.

(Hog and Sowkin go out.)

ISOLT.

Would I were a man, to be out there in the battle,
Instead of a woman, toiling to keep from brooding
On the fierce memories which are woman's portion,
Out there in the forest, where the river runs,
And the soft-foot deer go, and the otter plays,
And the partridge calls, my lover waits for me.
He waits in vain; I have bolted the bars on love.

(BRANGWEN enters.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BRANGWEN.

The hunter speared you a salmon in the river.
He said that he saw a young man in the forest.

ISOLT.

I have no wish to hear of what man he saw.

BRANGWEN.

This man was running frantic among the trees,
Beating his head, that was all crowned with flowers.

ISOLT.

There are many masterless men, and madmen, too,
In the great wood.

BRANGWEN.

This man wore all the flowers
That you most love: June flowers, sweet dog-rose buds,
Big ox-eye daisies, that children make old men of,
And clover cops that are partly red, part white.

ISOLT.

If he be mad, he is happier than some sane.
If the hunter go again to that forest place,
Let him not look at such madmen, nor bring tales
Back to this house about them. My madness is dead.

(She goes out.)

BRANGWEN.

You are she who forced me into your husband's bed
So that you might love this madman. Now you have
Marc
At the war, because you fled him; and Tristan mad.
Had Marc but drunken the wine, he would have loved
me.

Ah! woe to you if you turn again from the King.

(TRISTAN climbs in by window.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

Where is this Marc, this so-called King of Cornwall?

BRANGWEN.

By the Severn mouth, at the war, with Arthur, my prince.

TRISTAN.

You lie! Marc goes to no wars. Where is he hidden?

BRANGWEN.

You know me, Prince; you know that I do not lie.

TRISTAN.

How many miles to his camp?

BRANGWEN.

A hundred at least.

TRISTAN.

It is not a hundred.

BRANGWEN.

It's over the moor and the plain,
And over the Mendips beyond.

TRISTAN.

O God! O God!

He is out of my reach. When does he plan to return?

BRANGWEN.

Not till autumn.

TRISTAN.

Ah, God, I cannot get there to kill him,
Nor live till he comes; but I'll kill his steward at least.

BRANGWEN.

He too has gone to the war. O Prince, you are bleeding,
And fevered and broken and starved.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

Yes, I stumble and hit things.

BRANGWEN.

I will have a bed prepared.

TRISTAN.

No bed for me here.

No; they strew flour about the beds, for traps.

After those traps, all's fair.

I've been running the forest . . .

The moon was there and the deer and the grey
wolves . . .

Pitter-patter, pitter-patter, with fangs gleaming . . .

But a moor-man told me that Marc had murdered her,

So I'll break his neck across and tear out his heart.

But a hundred miles, you said: I haven't the strength.

Brangwen, sweet Brangwen, I want to kiss the ground

Where that most beautiful thing lies buried, at peace.

BRANGWEN.

Sir Tristan, Queen Isolt is not dead, but alive.

TRISTAN.

Mind what you say, girl; I am unable to bear.

BRANGWEN.

She is well.

TRISTAN.

Then where is her prison?

BRANGWEN.

She is the Queen.

TRISTAN.

And here? In the castle? Take me to where she is.

BRANGWEN.

Sweet Prince, you must wait.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

I am mad from waiting. Take me,
Or I'll kill you.

BRANGWEN.

Oh, you are hurting! Loose me, Prince.
You will frighten her as you are. I will bring raiment,
You shall bathe and dress; then see her.

TRISTAN.

I'll see her now.

BRANGWEN.

She thinks you dead. For pity's sake let me warn her.

TRISTAN.

Tell her at once then, girl.

BRANGWEN.

Yes; but you make ready.
Come with me, Prince. What bliss for you both to meet.
This way, Prince Tristan. While you dress I will tell her.

(She leads him off. ISOLT enters.)

ISOLT.

Tristan is mad, she said. He is sancer than I.
O I would that we loved like the birds, and then fled
south!

What is this hunting spear? It is Tristan's spear.
Yes; it is Tristan's spear. Did the hunter find it?
Or did Tristan bring it here? Yes, Tristan is here,
To take me back. They'll think that I sent for him.
Where is he now? Who is there?

(Hog enters.)

Hog.

It is I, my Queen.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Sir Bedwyr brings news of the war: he asks to see you. . . .
He is all foundered from riding.

ISOLT.

Bring him in, Ranger.

But, Ranger, wait. Have you seen Prince Tristan to-day?
Or heard of his being here?

HOG.

No, madam, indeed.

ISOLT.

Do you know who found this spear, or brought it hither?

HOG.

No spear like that came in at the gate, Queen Isolt.

ISOLT.

It has been brought here, within the last five minutes.

HOG.

It was brought through the windows then: not by the
doors.

ISOLT.

Bring in our people. Let Bedwyr tell us the news.

(ALL enter.)

BEDWYR.

God bless you, Queen. I bring you news of the battle.

ISOLT.

God bless the bringer of news: may the news be good.

BEDWYR.

Good news and bad: things given by God and taken.

Hear all, Queen Isolt and all the Cornish court,

Sir Arthur, the leader, bids me to tell you this:—

(Enter TRISTAN from above.)

BRANGWEN.

O prince, keep away!

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

TRISTAN.

Stand aside, Brangwen. My Isolt, beloved Isolt,
I thought you were dead. O my beloved, sweet saint,
Angel of God, dear darling; O my heart's best.
Come to me. I have been frantic for want of you.

ISOLT.

Hold this man, Ranger; help to secure him, Bedwyr.
Hold him away.

(He is caught.)

TRISTAN.

Isolt, for God's sake, give me
One little word. Loose me, friends, let me speak to her.
Loose me! I'll cut your throats else. Isolt, my Isolt!

ISOLT.

Can you come again, after your uncle's mercy?
Could you think I should greet you in my husband's
absence?
You are outlaw, sentenced to death: I could have you
hanged.

TRISTAN.

He told me that you were murdered and buried. O God!
Give me your hands. I will have your hands. Let me go.

ISOLT.

Carry that frantic madman into the court,
Deliver him to the guard as a cast felon,
And let the marshal flog him with fifty stripes
And drag him upon a hurdle out of the bounds.
Remove him.

TRISTAN.

Isolt, remember; think what I am!

ISOLT.

Think, you, of what you are; and of what I am.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

BEDWYR.

Away with him, as Queen Isolt bids.

TRISTAN.

O gods!
(*He is dragged out, struggling and raving.*)

ISOLT.

You harboured that creature, Brangwen.

BRANGWEN.

Yes. I love lovers
And I pity sufferers; life having taught me so.

ISOLT.

And I hate madness and trample it underfoot.
(*Enter BEDWYR.*)
Did you hand that man to the guard?

BEDWYR.

As the Queen bade.
(*The others enter.*)

ISOLT.

You, take your places; give good heed and be silent.
What news of the war, Sir Bedwyr?

BEDWYR.

We fought the heathen
At Badon Hill; we fought all day and all night,
And at dawn we fought them again: twelve times we
charged them,
Not seven heathen escaped alive: they are ended.

ISOLT.

Thank God, who has given victory to our men.

BEDWYR.

Let us also thank the men whose lives bought victory.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

Ah! doubtless many most precious have paid the price?

BEDWYR.

Many: and one most precious of all to Cornwall.
King Marc lies dead at the thorn tree by the brook,
Killed as we broke them. He being dead, I salute
Isolt, the Queen of Cornwall. God save Queen Isolt!
Our hearts and swords are Queen Isolt's to command.

ISOLT.

I thank you for this loyalty to our House.
I pray God help me to govern Cornwall rightly.

BEDWYR (*to the household*).

That Tristan, whom we have flogged out of Tintagel,
Was King Marc's heir, and still may claim to be King.
But we have turned him out for ever and ever,
Understand that. Queen Isolt alone rules Cornwall.
The man who kills that outlaw shall be rewarded.
May we take our leave, Queen?

ISOLT.

Yes, dismiss to your tasks.
(BRANGWEN *stays; the rest go.*)

Did that prince talk with you before he came down?

BRANGWEN.

Only to say how loving you made him mad.
Thinking you dead, he has lived upon leaves and grass;
No diet to withstand flogging from marshal's men.

ISOLT.

What I have done, I have done. Where is he living?

BRANGWEN.

He is not living, but dying. There's a hut on the moor
Where Pixne, the Ranger's girl, leaves comforts for him.
There he will speedily die from grief and shame.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

ISOLT.

It is no great pain to die, the heart being dead.

BRANGWEN.

No, madam, you utter truth: it is no great pain.
May I take your orders, madam?

ISOLT.

Orders? For what?

BRANGWEN.

For the funeral feast for your royal husband killed.

ISOLT.

There will be no funeral feast.

BRANGWEN.

For his burial, then.

ISOLT.

There will be no burial save what his comrades gave him.

BRANGWEN.

Surely his body will be borne from the field
And brought with flowers and lights here to Tintagel,
To be laid in a sacred place with his father's bones.

ISOLT.

God made the earth where he lies: he will sleep sweeter
Under the milkwort and the larks of heaven
Than in this charnel of bones and dead King's sin.

BRANGWEN.

He laid his glove beside you in noble mercy,
Yet you will not lay a flower upon his corpse,
Hacked as it is, in saving you from the heathen.
You could not love this royal man who is dead;
I could, and do, as the noblest, gentlest King
That ever was famed in Britain. Therefore, my Queen,
I at least shall go till I find where my lover lies.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

He was my lover for once; thank God therefor.
What worship these hands may render to the dead,
I will give, madam, being more his wife than you.

ISOLT.

May your last duties comfort your widowhood.

(BRANGWEN goes.)

(ISOLT comes forward to the front stage: the curtains close behind her.)

ISOLT.

So this one triumphs over me as a lover,
Thinks that she loves if, after sighing in secret,
She lays a daisy upon a dead man's body.
She has never known what it is.

Love is so terrible,

A love like mine. I have killed Tristan, my lover;
Killed him as though with a sword.
I have been perilous to Tristan and Marc.
What have they had from me but fever in the bones?
Marc was dead all the time: no need to have scourged
him.

I was the virtuous wife; see where it sank me.
It is ended: nothing can bring it back. I have
This little knife of mother's. Poor mother afar,
Who was thoughtful for me before I thought, and will
feel

After I cease to feel. The brook will run down
Over the shingle to sea; and the cornerake call;
And the honeysuckle, up in the glen, drowse sweetness:
And the moon come over the hill: mother will have them,
Not I: I shall not have them. What shall I have?
Some sky for the two wild swans to be wing in wing,
Some holly thicket for the stag and his deer,
Some space in heaven, where I, the comet, will seek
My mate, past withering orbs and moons gone blind,

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

For centuries to come. I am following, Tristan;
Wait for your cruel killer, a little hour.
You shall be my death as I have been yours, beloved.
We who have flooded like the Severn, will ebb
To the great sea together like tides going out.

(She moves off.)

(No wait.)

(The full stage. The forest scene.)

PIXNE.

Why, you are better, sir; you have come to yourself.
Now drink this apple-water: it's sweet and cooling.

TRISTAN.

You have been good to me like an angel of God.
But I shall never be better: I'm dying, Pixne.
What did you mean by "come to myself"? Myself;
I had a self once: destiny interfered.
I was a prince once, girl; but I loved a queen.
Before this life I was somewhere linked to her life;
After this life, God knows she will be at my soul,
Either my thirst in hell or my light in heaven.

Isolt the sweet, Isolt the bright,

In you my day, in you my night.

Isolt my love, Isolt my own.

I am fevered and faint. I have loved that lady, Pixne.

PIXNE.

Sir, do not think of her: it was that that harmed you.
You must not talk, lest your coughing begin again.

TRISTAN.

The coughing is over; like me.

Isolt my hope, Isolt my star,

In you my share of things that are.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

I cannot rhyme as I did. Pixne, if you loved me
And I were dying, even if we had quarrelled,
You would come to say good-bye?

PIXNE.

You know that I would.

So every woman would.

TRISTAN.

Not all. It is hard
For some, when they choose a path, to be thought mis-
taken.

But something here in my heart speaks of her coming
To say good-bye to her love.

PIXNE.

O my prince and master!
Whoever is coming, it is not to say good-bye,
But to heal your cruel wounds and your broken lungs,
And take you to some nice home with fire and wine
And good food fit for your health.

TRISTAN.

Look on the road, girl.
Is there anyone on a black horse crossing the moor?

PIXNE.

Nobody, sir.

TRISTAN.

She would come on the horse, Black Eagle,
Because I gave him to her.

PIXNE.

There is no black horse.

TRISTAN.

Not yet, perhaps; but look for a brown horse, Pixne:
She would send Brangwen first to say she is coming.
Is Brangwen there, on a brown horse, with a message?

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

PIXNE.

There is no horse at all on the moor, Sir Tristan,
But the carrier's blind white pony, moving away.

TRISTAN.

Brangwen was faithful. Brangwen, a Welsh king's
daughter,
Enslaved in a raid: a life of hell, which I worsened.
Brangwen, good Brangwen, a brown horse, or Black
Eagle.

(He lapses, muttering.)

PIXNE.

What are you muttering, Prince? Hush! I think he is
sleeping.

If he can rest now, he will throw off this cough.
I will creep out while he sleeps, to pray at the cross.
The prayers will help: I dare leave him for so long.
He is so weak, he must sleep, poor lovely man.

(She goes out.)

TRISTAN.

There was no horse on the moor, no horse at all,
Save a rider with a spare horse drawing nearer.
I shall mount and ride with him and not return.
But there is a horse upon the moor: I hear him.
I will look to see: alas, I am so weak
That I cannot stand, nor see. But on the moorland
A horse is at a gallop heading hither. . . .
It is she . . . yes . . . it is she. . . .
But she cannot know my dwelling, she will pass me.
Isolt, I am here! Isolt, Queen Isolt, Isolt!
No, no, she has passed: she could not hear me.
What time of year is it? are the harebells come?
It's the end of the year with me, Tristan, the Prince.
Isolt the maid, Isolt the Queen,
Isolt the April, budding green.

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

Those are Black Eagle's hoofs. Eagle, boy, Eagle!
Yes, it is Eagle, he hears me: Isolt is coming.
It is Isolt coming to see me before I die.

(The voice of ISOLT is heard.)

Isolt! come to me, Isolt!

ISOLT.

Tristan, my Tristan!
O my beloved Tristan, where are you hidden?

TRISTAN.

I am here, Isolt: I knew that you would come.
Ah! I shall not see her face: my death is on me.

(ISOLT enters.)

ISOLT.

O Tristan, my heart's own darling, take me again.

TRISTAN.

Isolt my blood, Isolt my breath,
In you my life; in you my death.

(He dies.)

ISOLT.

He has gone from me for ever from this shell,
This broken body that my cruelty killed.
I will come with you, Tristan; stay but a moment.
We two will journey together whatever ways
Bodiless spirits travel in the heaven
Of being set free. You were more beautiful, Tristan,
Than the young stag tossing tines near the holly thicket.
You were dearer to me than anything else on earth.
Take pity upon me, darling, though I took none.

(She stabs herself.)

Tristan, my captain, my love; my only love.

(She dies.)

(Enter PIXNE, DINAN, BRANGWEN, ARTHUR.)

TRISTAN AND ISOLT

PIXNE.

It is here, sir; they are here. O Sir Tristan; dead!

DINAN.

Dead: we're too late: the birds have flown from their cages.

ARTHUR.

We will bury them together, here where they lie.
If they have sinned, they have loved with a love
exceeding:

Now they are spirits of love, not bodies bleeding.

CURTAIN.

ÉPILOGUE.

DESTINY.

Not as men plan, nor as women pray, do things happen.
Unthought of, unseen, from the past, comes the ill without
cure;

By the spirit of man and the judgment of God it is
shapen;

And its end is our pride in the dust: it is just: it is sure.

THE END

NOTE.

Stage. This play was written to be played in two hours and twenty minutes upon a stage without scenery, hung with black cloths. It was written for a theatre with a fore-stage, or apron, and a main-stage on a somewhat higher level. At the back of, and above, the main stage, there is a gallery or balcony, approached by stairs on each side.

Some of the scenes of the play are designed for action on the apron, when the curtain between the two stages is drawn.

Costume. Should be that of Romanised Britons. Arthur should wear golden Roman armour with the scarlet cloak of a general. All the costumes, without exception, should be of bright and vivid colours: that of Kolbein should be the most barbaric and the gayest.

Decorations. The shields of King Marc's household bore a golden horse upon a blue field. The men of his household wore white satin scarves with black borders. His banners were white, with black points.

The ages of the characters:—

TRISTAN and ISOLT	.	about twenty years.
MARC	.	„ twenty-nine years.
THURID, ARTHUR, and		
KOLBEIN	.	„ forty-five „
DINAN, KAI, and BED-		
WYR	.	„ fifty-five „
HOG and SOWKIN	.	„ sixty „
TRISTAN, MARC, KOLBEIN and ARTHUR		should be clean-shaven.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

TO
MY WIFE

This play was performed at the Oxford Playhouse on Friday and Saturday, May 25 and 26, 1923, by the following cast of the Hill Players:

JEZEBEL (Queen of Samaria) ..	PENELOPE WHEELER
ROSE-FLOWER (First Chorus) ..	JUDITH MASEFIELD
MOON-BLOSSOM (Second Chorus)	JEAN DOWNS.
HAMUTAL (the Steward's Wife)	PAULISE DE BUSH
A PROPHET	BASIL MAINE
JEHU (Captain of the Horse) ..	RONALD HAY
MICAHAI (a Secr)	GEORGE G. EDWARDS
ATHAB (King of Samaria) ..	LESLIE DAVEY
PHARMAS (Court Attendant) ..	WILFRED MESSENGER
ASHODAL (Court Attendant) ..	HENRY CHAPIN
NABOTH (a Farmer)	DUDLEY BARLOW
AHAZIAH (Crown Prince of Samaria)	W. E. MAY
JORAM (his Younger Brother)..	WILFRED HOWE-NURSE
ZAKKUR (Jehu's Messenger) ..	H. G. WAKEFORD
PASHUR (the Bringer of the News)	C. E. J. VINCENT
ZIKRI (Spearman)	F. J. SAUNDERS
KALLAI (Spearman)	BERNARD GRIFFITHS

SCENE: The Palace in Samaria.

FIRST ACT.

JEZEBEL.

I AM Queen Jezebel, King Ahab's wife.
I was princess in Sidon long ago,
But in an evil day I became Queen
Over these strangers in Samaria.

Here, for these last ten months, we fought the Syrians,
Till hope was gone; then, suddenly, all changed;
The Syrian army fell into our hands.

King Ahab had two choices: one, to kill
All of the Syrians; one, to let them go.
He made a peace with them and let them go.

Now all the people of this city rage
At Ahab, for his peace, and cry aloud
That I, the foreign queen with foreign gods,
Made Ahab make the peace to please my friends.

Four days ago, King Ahab sought to buy
A vineyard from one Naboth, who refused
To sell the vineyard, even to his King.
To-day the rebels of the town prepare
A feast to Naboth for refusing him,
And at the feast the prophets and seditious
Will urge our murder as a godly deed.

What is King Ahab doing to defeat them?
Nothing. For these three days he has been hidden,
Brooding upon his bed in bitterness;

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Refusing food and drink; refusing speech
With me, his wife; neglecting court and state;
Letting rebellion grow, and seeing no man
Except our younger son, evil Prince Joram,
Who longs for war against the Syrians.

So I, the Queen, not knowing what may come
When the King sickens and the people rage,
Have sent for help, called home our eldest son,
Prince Ahaziah, from his frontier post
With all his horsemen. He should soon be here.

With Ahaziah and his horsemen here
We shall be safer from our enemies,
The T'eshbon prophet and the soldier Jehu,
The captain of the horse under the King.

* * * * *

Those are the enemies whom I most dread,
Lord Jehu and the Prophet, hand and mouth
To violence and unwise ways of life,
Violent and brainless both, as lightning is.
When violence and madness are in league,
Destruction comes.

And they are coming now,
Here to the palace of the King and Queen,
To plot their evil with our followers.

I will go hence, to pray that Ahaziah
May come in time to thwart their wickedness.

(Exit.)

(Enter the PROPHET.)

PROPHET.

Lord Jehu!

A KING'S DAUGHTER

(Enter JEHU.)

JEHU.

Ha, my Prophet!

PROPHET.

Is all well?

JEHU.

Yes. All goes well. This King, this imbecile,
This Ahab, still is sulking like a child,
Speaking with no one, making all things easy
For us, my Prophet, who will now succeed.
Nothing can stop us now. All works for us.
Ahab is hated; Jezebel detested;
The army sickened at their loss of plunder,
All hot against them both. Our only danger
Their son, Prince Ahaziah, far away,
Their other son, Prince Joram, working for us.
And now this feast to Naboth as a crown
To all these helps, an opportunity.

PROPHET.

Truly our work is godly, since it prospers.
Since all is thriving, it is surely time
That we set forth together to this feast.

JEHU.

Wait, yet, my Prophet, while I ask you this:
What objects will be served by this our feast?

PROPHET.

Why, it will honour Naboth for resisting
The tyrant whom we hate, and give our friends
A chance to come together with Prince Joram
To cry aloud for war with Syria.

JEHU.

True, Prophet; "Honour Naboth; cry for war;"
Such were our objects when we planned the feast:

A KING'S DAUGHTER

That was the plan, but, friend, it is not now.
No, Prophet, no; for I have changed my mind.
This feast to Naboth which we have prepared
Must be the prelude to a mightier deed.
Prophet, I know thy zeal for true religion,
And you know mine; now, therefore, stand by me.
I am determined to be King this day.
The chances are all for me, and the feast
Puts them within my hand for me to take.
Now, therefore, Prophet, when you see me there,
Sitting at feast among the men-of-war,
Send out some youngling of the Prophet tribe
There to anoint me King in Ahab's stead.
Then I will rise and lead those men-at-arms
To end this Ahab and his Jezebel,
And stamp them with our horses' feet, and bring
A true religion back: by God, we need it.
No. Doubt not the success. Anoint me King,
The men will follow. For, by God, now, Prophet,
Look at my eyes, I mean this to succeed.
This is the way, because all other ways,
The way we planned before and any way,
Must end in this; so send the stripling to me.
Make me the King.

PROPHET.

Truly a spirit speaks within you, Jehu.
Truly the devilries of Jezebel
Have brimmed the cup, and Ahab's treachery
Has spilled it over. You shall be the King.
Here with my blood I do anoint you King.
My young man shall anoint you with the oil,
But will the captains follow you as King?

JEHU.

They'll follow; some for plunder, some for fear.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Now let us to this Naboth's feast, to raise
Our following against this doting King.

PROPHET.

Here is our friend Ashobal with some news.

(Enter ASHOBAL.)

ASHOBAL.

I was afraid that you had gone, Lord Jehu.
Prophet, Lord Jehu, there is danger here.
I have just heard from Jezebel's own lips
That she has ordered Ahaziah hither
With all his horse, and that he will be here
Within two hours.

PROPHET.

Gods!

JEHU.

Did Jezebel

Tell you of this?

ASHOBAL.

No; I was hidden, and
I overheard her as she told her woman.

PROPHET.

She sent for them?

ASHOBAL.

She said so.

PROPHET.

But for what?

To be a bodyguard?

ASHOBAL.

She did not say,
But that is what they will be when they come.

PROPHET.

Then she suspects us.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PROPHET.

Probably.

JEHU.

The hag!

PROPHET.

These women of false gods shall die the death.

JEHU.

Yes, unless we die first. Thank you, Ashobal,
You bring the message in the nick of time.
Why has she sent for them? Is Ahab dying?
No; he is ill, not dying. By the gods,
The harlot may be plotting against Ahab
To crown her son?
No, by the gods, put by these pleasant dreams,
The likelier thing will be the explanation.
One of the little sheep within our fold
Has bleated to the shepherd: we have been
Betrayed, my Prophet and my sweet Ashobal,
Betrayed. . . . By whom?
By all the gods, this harlot is a man.
She hears of us, at once decides to strike,
Sends for the cavalry to cut our throats,
Calls Ahaziah to be King until
Her Ahab be a man again, and so
Bids for her husband's crown. There are the facts.

ASHOBAL.

Even so I judged it, from the way she spoke.

PROPHET.

Then we had better scatter into hiding,
For we are lost.

JEHU.

True, brother Prophet, all our heads are loose,
But yet not lost.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PROPHET.

But what are we to do?

JEHU.

Stop Ahaziah in his coming here.
It can be done if he be two hours hence.
He must be coming by the desert road
Passing by Springs. Well, he shall meet his match.
Go, Prophet, to the feasting, as we planned.
Praise Naboth and be bitterer than spurge
About this peace. Pharmas must know of this.
Find Pharmas, that the Prophet speak with him.
Then tell what friends you can. Remember, Prophet,
Hold to our former plans till I return.
Now I must go.

(Exit JEHU.)

PROPHET.

And we had better go
Straight into hiding, while we have the time.

ASHOBAL.

No, we must keep to what is planned and do
What Jehu tells us.

PROPHET.

I must see Pharmas, then; find Pharmas for me.

ASHOBAL.

I cannot yet.
Pharmas is in attendance on the Queen.

PROPHET.

Why should he be with her, to-day of all days?
He is the King's attendant, not the Queen's.

ASHOBAL.

True, but the Queen commanded him this morning
To write at her dictation; he will be
There until noon; but it is nearly noon.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PROPHET.

We are discovered by this Jezebel.
And Pharnas has betrayed us.

ASHOBAL.

No, he is faithful to us. Five years since
This Jezebel once chided him in public
For breaking of a cup. He has remembered;
He swore to be revenged and means to be.
Now I say this: Come on the stroke of noon,
Here, to have speech with Pharnas and myself.
We may have news by then. If the worst happen,
We shall have time enough for flight at noon.

PROPHET.

You may be right; pray Heaven that you be.

ASHOBAL.

Hark! there is someone coming through the court.
By Heaven!

PROPHET.

Why, who is it? What has happened?

ASHOBAL.

It is the King, recovered from his brooding
And dressed as for an audience with his peers.
If Ahab be in health again, why, death——

PROPHET.

What shall we do? Oh, say!

ASHOBAL.

Be not found here.

He's coming hither with his man, Micaiah.
Go quickly, quickly.

(Exit PROPHET.)

(Enter MICAIAH.)

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MICAIAH.

Way for their Majesties! It is commanded
That all avoid. Way for their Majesties!
Avoid the room, Ashobal, for the King.

(Exit ASHOBAL.)

(Enter AHAB.)

AHAB.

Micaiah, put my staff into my hands.
Go, now, desire the Queen to give me audience.

(Exit MICAIAH.)

Thus does the climber on a pinnacle.
He stands exhausted on the peak and feels
Nothing beneath him but the mist of cloud
Hiding the precipice. I have my foothold;
Around me, the sheer fall into the pit.

(Enter JEZEBEL.)

JEZEBEL.

So, my good lord, at last I look upon you
After these days of anguish. O my lord,
What has afflicted you, that you should shut
Your doors upon me, send no word to me,
No word till now, not even let me know
If you were ill or well?

But no upbraiding.

Tell me what is the trouble of your soul?

AHAB.

What do you think?

JEZEBEL.

I know not what to think,
Living alone, shut from you, that should tell me.
Men say that you are grieved because a farmer,
One Naboth, would not sell his vineyard to you.

AHAB.

I, grieved, at that?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

I have no guide save rumour.

AHAB.

His vineyard? Why, I did not want the vineyard.

JEZEBEL.

Not want it, lord?

AHAB.

Why should I want it; think?

JEZEBEL.

I cannot think, indeed, why you should want it.

AHAB.

Jehu was wanting it, to bring it in
Within the city wall, for in the siege
The Syrian archers shot our people from it.
Jehu demanded it.

JEZEBEL.

Jehu? Not you?

Yet do you know that men are cursing you
For wanting Naboth's land; and feasting Naboth
To-day, in public, for refusing you?
And that our crowns and even our lives are threatened?

AHAB.

No, Queen, I do not know and cannot care.
What is the raging of the fools to me
Who ponder day and night upon a question,
A question that goes down into the bone
And burns like fire, till I cannot sleep
Or eat or work, for it is always here.
No, do not look like that, I am not mad,
Not yet; I am not mad. But always night and day
This question is about me and within me,
Haunting and harsh: the question, "Am I wrong?
Are these, my people who oppose my will,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Right, after all, righter than I, the King?
Righter throughout my twenty years of kingship?"

JEZEBEL.

How can these preys to every passionate flaw
Be righter than an upright mind and conscience?

AHAB.

I cannot tell, and yet I think they are.

JEZEBEL.

You know they are not.

AHAB.

No, I do not know.

I wonder, if the blunt and bawdy world
Be not the worse for wisdom, not the better.

JEZEBEL.

It is a sin and cowardice to say so.

AHAB.

Is it, my Queen? I wonder if it be.
Here have I striven twenty years, for peace
With Syria, and for liberty of thought
Within our borders, yet with what results?
Almost continual war with Syria.
Almost a civil war within this land.
Such being the fruits, I think the seeds were wrong.

JEZEBEL.

The seeds were right, and if the fruit has failed,
Blame the bad soil, the bitter weather, drought,
Evil of many men hacking the plant,
All things, but you who planted, and the seed.

AHAB.

Even if the seed were right, the ground was wrong.
And then I sowed it out of season, lady.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

I could have smitten Syria to the dust,
Yet granted terms. I risked a civil war
To grant the terms. They do not keep the terms.
And these my people prefer blood to quiet.
And now I doubt the usefulness of wisdom,
Doubt my whole life; and wonder, if the prophets,
The people, and the bloody ways they love,
Be not indeed God's ways for governing.
If these things be, then I have failed my country.

JEZEBEL.

O King, you cannot say that things are wrong
Because they fail. All good things seem to fail;
The road that men make is not straight nor smooth,
Nor like the perfect roadway that they planned;
And yet among the thorns and broken flint,
And twistings where the adder lies in wait,
It is a path where no path was before.
So with your Syrian pact and with these people,
You have hewed out a way where men will tread.
Be comforted and proud, for you have done it,
As the lone artist makes the perfect thing,
With every blind malignant saying "No!"
You have made peace as generous as yourself
And thought as free. So let the madman rave
And let the savage shriek for blood, and let
The blind worm of the many-creeping world
Crawl its obstruction, you have conquered them.

АНАБ.

It is not true. I have not conquered them.
They conquer me. I am defeated. Yes,
I cannot think, or master, or decide,
Having no longer any faith remaining
In what we planned together and have done.
The ground is gone from under me, the light

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Is gone from in me, and the sky above
Is black with punishment that threatens me.
These ruffian prophets have been proven right,
Our policies have been accursed; ay,
And the reward is death.

JEZEBEL.

O husband, stay!

AHAB.

I will not stay. The penalty is death,
With hell to follow, as the blind man's payment
Fully deserved.

(Exit AHAB.)

JEZEBEL.

Gods save us, he is mad, or over-wrought
Up to the point of madness; now, indeed,
We have been conquered, for we have no King
Save one distraught with trouble. How am I
To help in this?
So ends my queenship with him. It is well
That I have called Prince Ahaziah home.
But, till he come, I govern, I am King,
And one act of a King must now be done:
This rebels' feast to Naboth must be stopped.

(She claps her hands for MICAIAH, who enters.)

Micaiah, is there dust upon the road
To show the Prince's coming?

MICAIAH.

Not yet, Madam.

JEZEBEL.

How soon can he be here?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MICAIAH.

Within two hours.
Unless he halt for noontide by the Springs.
He might be here much sooner. Say, one hour.

JEZEBEL.

Who is the captain of the guard to-day?

MICAIAH.

Rechab, to-day, good lady.

JEZEBEL.

Go, Micaiah,
Tell Pharnas that I wait him in the throne room,
Bid him bring ink and seals; bid him be quick,
Attend me there.

MICAIAH.

Madam, I go.

(Exit MICAIAH.)

JEZEBEL.

Though the King sicken, it shall still be seen
That I, the Syrian woman, am a queen.

(Exit JEZEBEL.)

(Enter PROPHET.)

PROPHET.

Pharnas! Ashobal! Hark! Is Pharnas there?
It is full moon, but Pharnas is not here,
No, nor Ashobal. But there seems to be
Less danger than I feared: I was not questioned,
And men go unmolested to the feast.

(Enter ASHOBAL.)

Here is Ashobal. Where is Pharnas, friend?

ASHOBAL.

Gone to the Queen again, with ink and seals.
There is this news: the King and Queen have talked

A KING'S DAUGHTER

And Ahab now is in his room again,
Moodily sharpening his sword, and muttering.
I myself think that Ahab has gone mad.

PROPHET.

No word from Jehu yet, of Ahaziah?

ASHOBAL.

None yet, nor will be for a while.

PROPHET.

King Jehu,
Jehu, the King, God's comet, bringing change.
Come soon, come soon. Oh, what is Pharmas doing?

ASHOBAL.

He writes some pressing matter for the Queen.

PROPHET.

We shall be late. Come, Pharmas! Hurry, hurry!
Would he were here and we away from this.
We are like hunters in the lion's den,
Knowing the lion to be near.

ASHOBAL.

I hear him.

Yes; this is Pharmas coming. Here he is.

(Enter PHARMAS.)

PROPHET.

Pharmas, we have been waiting for you; come.
We must be going. Listen to your orders.
During this feast go down among the guards . . .

PHARMAS.

Do not you talk of feasting, nor of guards.
The Queen has sent Micaiah with the guards
To fetch poor Naboth here.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ASHOBAL.

Why?

PROPHET.

What to do?

PIARMAS.

I do not know; but not for any good.

"Fetch Naboth here before me," was the order.

It has gone off by this.

ASHOBAL.

This is the end!

PROPHET.

What can she want with Naboth? Painted hag,

Thus to command a man.

ASHOBAL.

Was the guard ordered to suppress the feast?

PIARMAS.

No, but it is suppressed with Naboth taken.

ASHOBAL.

We shall be taken next, so save yourself.

PROPHET.

I will be gone. You know my hiding-place,

The old one near the wall: send word to me

There, if you have a message.

(Exit.)

MICAH.

Way for Her Majesty the Queen, make way!

(Enter MICAH.)

Set forth the chair of audience for the Queen.

Be reverent; the Queen approaches. Hail!

(Enter JEZEBEL.)

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

Micaiah, Pharnas, and Ashobal, stay.
Within few moments, when the guards return,
You will return to take your places here,
Even as you stand this minute.

THE MEN.

We will do so.

JEZEBEL.

All three of you; you understand?

THE MEN.

Yes, Madam.

JEZEBEL.

Dismiss then, till the guards appear.

(The MEN go.)

I am the King, upon whose balance lies
The nation's need to prompt me to be wise.
Ruin to all I cherish, if I fail.
God, judge for me, thy wisdom turn the scale.

CURTAIN.

FIRST CHORUS

ROSE-FLOWER

Once long ago young Nireus was the King
In Syme Island, so the stories say,
And at his birth the gods made holiday,
And blessed the child and gave him each one thing,

Courage, and skill, and beauty, and bright eyes,
Wisdom, and charm, and many another power,
So that he grew to manhood like a flower
For beauty, and like God for being wise.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Now Nireus' friend was Paris, out of Troy,
Paris, the prince, the archer, who had seen
The goddesses, within the forest green;
King Priam's son, a peacock of a boy.

MOON-BLOSSOM

At Sparta's court, not far from Syme Isle,
Bright Helen lived, King Menelaus' Queen,
The loveliest woman that has ever been,
Who made all mortals love her by her smile.

Nireus and Paris went together there
To Helen's palace: and when Nireus saw
Helen the Queen, the lovely without flaw,
He loved her like her shadow everywhere.

And Paris, when he saw her with her mate,
Helen, the rose, beside that withered weed,
Loved her no less, but with a young man's greed
That wants the moon from heaven and cannot wait.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Straightway he wooed Queen Helen to be his,
And won her love, and cried to Nireus then,
"O Nireus, help to save us from this den,
Lend us your ship to bring us out of this."

So Nireus, though his heart was torn with pain,
Well knowing what would come, yet took the pair
To many-towered Troy and left them there,
To live in love and be the city's bane.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

When Menelaus knew of Helen's flight,
He led all Greece in arms to punish Troy,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Nireus went with him in the fleet, and joy
Ceased in the world, for all men went to fight.

Nine years they fought there in the tamarisk field,
And in the tenth, in some blind midnight stour,
Nireus killed Paris underneath the tower.
Men bore him back to Helen on his shield.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Then Troy was sacked and Menelaus took
Beautiful Helen as his prisoner home,
And locked her in his castle as a gnome
Might lock a gem on which no man might look.

TOGETHER.

Thus Nireus lost his love, and killed his friend,
And knew despair; so going to his ship,
He sailed to where the constellations dip,
In the great west, to look for the world's end.

SECOND CHORUS

ROSE-FLOWER.

When Troy was sacked and all her towers
Blazed up and shook into the sky,
Smoke like great trees and flame like flowers,
And Priam's bodyguard did die,

Then the Queen's women snatched up spears,
And fought their way out of the gate;
Seized horses from the charioteers
And fled like mountain-streams in spate.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

They would not stay for slavery
To some Greek lord until they died,
They rode the forest to be free,
Up on the peaks of snowy Idc.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

And in the forest on a peak
They hewed a dwelling with the bronze,
And lived, unconquered by the Greek,
Fierce, sun-burned women, neither tame nor weak,
The panther-women called the Amazons.

They lived there on the heights and knew no men,
Having beheld the lusts of men destroy
The town of windy Troy,
They killed all men they met; their only joy
Was hunting for the wild beasts in the glen.

TOGETHER.

The wild boar and the many-branching stag,
Horse-killing panthers hidden by the brook,
The spotted death among the yellow flag,
All these with their bright spears these women took.
All these, and men, for even to be seen
By men, these hunter-women thought unclean.

So no man saw them save a glimpse afar.
Of panther-skins flung back, and swift feet flying,
And the red stag brought low to the fierce Hal
Of women's spear-thrusts driven in the dying.
They ruled the crags like wolves, they kept their pride,
Savage and sovereign like the snow on Idc.

SECOND ACT

MICAIAH.

Madam, the soldiers have brought the farmer, Naboth; they have him in the guard-room, waiting for your orders.

JEZEBEL.

Were you set upon as you brought him through the city?

MICAIAH.

No, Madam, but a crowd followed, which is now at the palace gates.

JEZEBEL.

Is it threatening?

MICAIAH.

No, Madam, but uneasy.

JEZEBEL.

Thank you, Micaiah. What standing has this Naboth?

MICAIAH.

He lives in the city, but has this vinyard and some other ground outside the walls. He is a small farmer, strict in religion. Nothing but religion will move him.

JEZEBEL.

I will try whether that be true. Go now, without, and bring me Ashobal and Pharnas.

MICAIAH.

I will, Madam.

(Exit.)

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

If I can persuade this man to sell his land, then this gathering will lose all purpose. If he will not sell, as I doubt he will not, then, how then?

(MICAIAH, PHARMAS, ASIHOBAL enter.)

Stand where you are and pay especial heed
To what is said by us.

THE MEN.

We will, great Queen.

JEZEBEL.

I thank you. Will you bring the man, Micaiah?
(Enter MICAIAH, with NABOTH, crowned as for a feast.)

MICAIAH.

Madam, your servant waits for your commands.

JEZEBEL.

Thank you, Micaiah. Keep in presence here.
You are that Naboth of the South-west Precinct?
(NABOTH nods.)

Our calling of you here may come untimely.
You are at least, or going to a feast?

NABOTH.

I'm here; you've caught me; do the worst you can,
But do not mock me.

JEZEBEL.

I mock no one, Naboth.
I sent for you because I wished to speak
About the purchase of your vineyard near
The city wall.

NABOTH.

Why do you want my vineyard? Tell me that!

JEZEBEL.

I do not want it.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

NABOTH.

Well, your husband does.

JEZEBEL.

He does not, Naboth. Listen, all of you.
There is a false suspicion spread abroad
That we, the King and Queen, have coveted
This land of Naboth's. It is wholly false.
We do not want it, never wanted it,
But bid for it, on public grounds, because
Lord Jehu, captain of the bodyguard,
The overseer of the town's defences,
Urged, and still urges, that the vineyard be
Brought in within the city wall. As King,
The King made offer for the land, through one . . .
Which of you was it?

ASHOBAL.

I made the offer for His Majesty,
So please you, Madam.

JEZEBEL.

Since it is not your rulers but your city
That needs the land, we ask you to consider
The giving up your holding to be walled.

NABOTH.

God pleased to put my vineyard where it is,
Why should you change it?

MICAIAH.

In the siege, good Naboth,
The Syrian archers used to shoot from it
Into the city.

NABOTH.

And they might again
Soon in another siege?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

So Jehu thought.

NABOTH.

If you idolaters had done God's will
And killed these Syrians when God bade you kill,
You would have had no other siege to dread.

ASHORAH.

You must not speak this evil of your rulers.
Say nothing but as touching on the treaty.

JEZEBEL.

Whether your land should be enclosed or no
I cannot tell: Duke Jehu says it should be;
Says that for public good it should be walled.
You would not sorrow that your land should go
For greater safety of your fellow townsmen?

NABOTH.

I would.

JEZEBEL.

I do not think you would, good sir;
Yet, if a war should follow and a siege
Threaten again, your vineyard would be taken
Maugre your will, and walled in spite of you
By public means; and you would lose it, so.

NABOTH.

I would not lose it. It would still be mine.

JEZEBEL.

I cannot well see how; but let that be.
I ask you now to be content to treat
For this your plot. May we proceed in this?

NABOTH.

Dismiss your gang of killers here, these three
Lying in wait upon a poor man's words.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

These are no killers, but my palace servants.
We are in treaty for exchange of land,
Or hope to be, and civil law prescribes
That sales of land be bargained before witness.

NABOTH.

Where are my witnesses, to speak for me?

JEZEBEL.

Well thought of, Naboth. Will you therefore send
To three, your friends, to witness to your words?

NABOTH.

No, I will not.

JEZEBEL.

Why not?

NABOTH.

No matter why.

You have caught me, but catch my friends yourself
If you do want them.

JEZEBEL.

Will you choose three men

Here in the palace, then, as witnesses?

NABOTH.

I have a witness, stronger than your three,
Already present, woman of false gods.

ASHOBAL.

Do not misname the person of your Queen.
You will lose all by rudeness. You have heard
That our great Queen demands to bargain with you,
But means no harm to you, nor to your friends.

JEZEBEL.

Thank you, Ashobal. (*Then to NABOTH.*)

May we now proceed?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

NABOTH.

I have not yet agreed to treat with you.

JEZEBEL.

You waste our time. Speak. Will you treat or not?

NABOTH.

Before I treat, what do you offer for it?

JEZEBEL.

What is its yearly value?

ASHOBAL.

Seven casks.

MICAHAIL.

Madam, that may have been the yearly yield
In its best seasons, but it is not now.
It is no vineyard now, great Queen; the vines
Were routed up by Syrians in the siege.

JEZEBEL.

So? Did you know of this, Ashobal?

ASHOBAL.

No.

JEZEBEL.

Not know of it?

ASHOBAL.

Not when I bargained for it.

JEZEBEL.

Yet knew it now, and never mentioned it?
Would let me bargain for a vineless vineyard
As though it gave full vintage.

ASHOBAL.

O good Madam,

You asked its yearly value, not its worth.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

That shall be proved. Naboth, I did not know
That this your vineyard had been rooted up.

NABOTH.

That damned idolater, your husband, knew it.
He said that as it was not now a vineyard,
He could plant herbs there.

JEZEBEL.

Bridle you your tongue.
When did His Majesty the King say this?
To whom?

NABOTH.

It is well known he said it openly.

JEZEBEL.

To you?

NABOTH.

No.

JEZEBEL.

Then to whom? To one of these?
You are all silent. Yet the King has seen
No other man, since his return to Shemer,
Except Prince Joram; therefore what you say
Is false in fact, seditious being said.
Ashobal, what was offered for the vineyard?

ASHOBAL.

A better vineyard; then, that being refused,
Three vineyards, each one better, in full bearing,
Two of red grapes and one of white, O Queen.

JEZEBEL.

And he refused?

MICAH.

He did.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL (*to NABOTH*).

And do you still?

NABOTH.

Yes.

JEZEBEL.

Why?

NABOTH.

Because the vineyards that he offered
Aren't his to offer.

JEZEBEL.

But they are, good Naboth.

They are the King's.

NABOTH.

Does the King work them, then?

JEZEBEL.

Yes, they are worked at his command. How else?

NABOTH.

His sweat does not fall on them.

JEZEBEL.

It has done so.

He with his own hands worked those vineyards, Naboth,
Before his father, Omri, became King,
As you well know.

NABOTH.

I'll have no slave-tilled vineyard.

JEZEBEL.

Men cannot live without the work of others;
You yourself do not. Did you make that robe,
Those shoes, that pouch? But we are wandering.
Let me, the Queen, make offer for your vineyards.
I offer the King's vineyards as before,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

And with them, the three marrowy olive-groves
Which Shemer planted.

NABOTH.

Shemer! And what more?

MICAH.

What more?

ASHOBAL.

Good heaven, you surely ask no more?

NABOTH.

I do. It's not enough.

JEZEBEL.

Then name your price.

NABOTH.

I cannot be buyer and seller both.

JEZEBEL.

Then I will offer these: a bale of scarlet,
A camel-load of wool, woven or raw,
Three tent-rugs such as desert tribesmen weave,
Three desert-cushions made of coloured leather,
And one sealed roll of linen from the Nile,
The deckings of a house, in fact. With these,
Something to gladden dwellers in the house,
A score of honey, and a man-sized jar
Of olive oil, a measure of fine flour,
A pack of dates and seven porters' loads
Of matured wine; the feasting of a house.
With these, I offer treasures for your house,
Gums from Arabia to burn as perfumes,
A tusk of ivory two cubits long,
A bar of silver from the mines of Bakht,
A casket made of turkis filled with beryl,
A piece of gold, the size of a man's hand.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

NABOTH.

I want no ivory nor gold nor scarlet,
Nor silver bars nor trash nor vanity.

MICAHAIH.

Good Madam, might it not be wise to offer
Stock for his farm?

JEZEBEL.

Take horses, then, or oxen
To till your holding.

NABOTH.

I will not take them, then.

MICAHAIH.

Would you not like them?

NABOTH.

No; I do without;
I need nor horse nor ass, nor cow nor camel.

JEZEBEL.

What can I offer?

NABOTH.

Sacrifice to the God of Israel.

JEZEBEL.

I do not offer that.

NABOTH.

You are not one
To search unto the spirit, nor be single
Within your heart. You are possessed by things;
Dead things, with stink and colour, brought in ships;
Your purples and the jewels for your hair,
Your ivory room, God save us! you being mortal,
Dwelling in ivory, while God himself
Lives in the wooden room darkened by wings.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MICAHIAH.

Yes, Naboth; but reserve this for the feast,
Where those who hear it will enjoy it more
Than we do here.

NABOTH.

I do not speak to you.

JEZEBEL.

No, Naboth, you are speaking to your Queen,
Who bids you to be silent, if you care
To keep whole bones. Come from him, then, Micajah.
Hear a last offer, Naboth; you are old,
Soon to become infirm, soon to bear pain.
And find it weariness to cross the room.
Might I not set provision for old age
Against your vineyard? Might I settle on you
A pension that would bring you quietness
And what age loves, respect and ease and state;
Might we not give you rank, as Elder, say,
With pay and servants fitting to the rank;
These things to be assured to you for life,
And after, to your son?

NABOTH.

I have no son.

My son was killed while fighting for King Ahab
In this last war. I will not sell my vineyard
For all the rank, for all the slaves and ease
In this realm that you make the gate of hell.
God blot me from the record of the blest
If I give up my father's heritage,
If I commit into polluted hands,
Red with the blood of offerings to false gods,
The earth my father worked and worshipped in.
It is my vineyard and it shall be mine,
By God's red hand the King should be ashamed;

A KING'S DAUGHTER

You too would be ashamed were you not shameless,
To tempt a poor man's soul with merchandise;
You, smeared with spice, painted, and dripping perfume,
A shameless woman, chaffering with a man,
And he, the King, a dallier with God's foes,
Conspiring thus to cheat me of my vineyard.
God puts a word into my mouth to say,
He makes my mouth to spit upon you both.
There is for you. And there is for the King.
I spit upon you both and bid God curse you,
Curse you to ruin and to rottenness.
As here I curse you; him for making peace,
Where no peace is, and you, you insolent woman,
For being, like the King, a curse on Israel,
A bringer down into the pit of hell.

MICAHAIH.

You shall avoid the presence when you curse.

(Exit with NABOTH.)

JEZEBEL.

You heard the curses of this franlic man?

ASHOBAL *and* PIARMAS.

Madam, we did. We longed to silence him.

JEZEBEL.

Rechab is captain of the guard to-day?

PIARMAS.

Yes, Madam.

ASHOBAL.

Rechab, with the Jezreel troop,
Mounts guard till night.

JEZEBEL.

That will be well, Ashobal.
You know the ivory room that the King made?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

You know that it was never planned nor used
For anything save as an inmost shrine
For worshipping of God?

PHARMAS *and* ASHOBAL.

We know it, Madam.

JEZEBEL.

Here is Micaiah back. Has Naboth gone?

MICAHIAH.

Yes, Madam, to the rabble of his friends
Waiting his coming at the palace gate.
Now they are taking him triumphantly
Up to the feast, shouting, "He held his own
Against the royal tyrants." At the feast,
When they have drunken, they will speak worse evil.

JEZEBEL.

You all remember what he uttered here?
How he misused the name of God, and cursed
The King and me?

MICAHIAH, ASHOBAL, *and* PHARMAS (*together*).

We do remember.

JEZEBEL.

Wait, then, some minutes, till the feast be set,
Then summon up the chapter of the priests,
And Rechab with his troop of bodyguard.
Then march with priests and soldiers to the banquet.
Let the priests call for silence from the throng,
And in the silence do you three stand forth,
Bear witness against Naboth in these terms:
"Thou didst blaspheme God and the King!" repeat
The words he uttered, bear each other witness;
And if a further witness be required,
Say I, the Queen, will come to testify,
Who heard the words, yet spared the speaker of them,
So that the priests, whose cause it is, might judge.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Then call upon the priests to utter judgment
According to the laws of blasphemy.

MICAHAIH, PHARMAS, and ASHOBAL.

We will obey your orders instantly.

(They go out.)

JEZEDEEL.

Which brings the greater woe: to pass an evil,
Or break your Being's law to combat it?
The allotted sorrow ever has a gateway.

CURTAIN.

THIRD CHORUS

ROSE-FLOWER.

Nircus sailed; and a strange wind blew him to islands
unseen before,

Where the gods sat throned on the crags with peace on
their marvellous faces,

Clouds and the smoke of fire, that glittered and changed,
they wore!

And unto them came the crying of all man's sorrowful
races.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

They cried to him as he passed, "You are seeking and
you shall find,

Not in the way you hope, not in the way foreseen;
Out of horror of soul, ache, and anguish of mind,
Out of the desert of all, shall come the leaf that is
green."

ROSE-FLOWER.

Then the wind blew on to an island where millet is ever in
ear,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

And the horses that live in the sea come thronging in
thousands to eat,
And the horses that live on the island will never let them
come near,
But they fight on the beaches forever with flashing and
thunder of feet.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Then he sailed by invisible islands, he smelt the fruit on
the trees,
And heard the noise in the shipyards and the crowing
of cocks unseen,
Then sheered from the roar of breakers and on over
unknown seas,
And ever he grieved for Paris, and thought of the
beautiful Queen.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Then he came to a sea of terror, where monsters rose
from the sea,
Things with the beaks of birds and arms like the
suckers of vines:
Things like ghosts in the water coming motionlessly
To tatter the flesh of men with teeth like the cactus-
spines.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Over unending water ever he held his course,
Birds that were curses followed, crying around and
above:
"Nireus, broken by beauty, broken again by remorse,
Goes to the breaking of death for killing his friend and
love."

ROSE-FLOWER.

And ever he cursed himself for bringing them both to
wreck,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Helen and Paris, the lovely; and ever the waves seemed
filled
With skull-bones hollow in death, that rose and peered
on the deck:
And he thought, "They are those from Troy whom I in
my madness killed.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

"Had I refused, when they asked for my help to escape,
Paris would still be alive, Troy, the city, would stand,
And all the killed of the war would be tilling the corn and
the grape,
Not ghosts with a curse in the air and torn bones
strewing the land."

ROSE-FLOWER.

So he sailed; but at night in the dark when the lantern
bubbled aloft,
And men lay sleeping, when all save he were asleep,
And the ship slid on with a gurgle of water soft,
He knew that the dead of Troy came with him over the
deep.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Out of the long-backed roller that slid from its crest of
foam,
Gibbered the bloodless dead, white faces with haggard
eyes,
Pointing the bones of their hands at him who had forced
them from home,
Their curses came to his ears like little twittering cries.

TOGETHER.

Whenever he moored at an island for water or food or
rest,
Soon those wraiths of the dead would rise and bid him
beware,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

To harry the resting gannet out of the roller's crest,
And carry the curse of his soul to the unknown, on and
on.

FOURTH CHORUS.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

In the grey of morning
When the stars were paling,
Nireus sailing,
Saw land ahead.
An island shining
With city towers,
Where bells were ringing
And men singing.

ROSE-FLOWER.

As Nireus stepped ashore there
He stood staring,
For all men there
Were the dead of the war:
The Greeks and Trojans,
Beautiful and swift,
Killed in the trampled tamarisks
Beneath Troy town.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Stars were in their hair,
Their brows were crowned with violets,
They stepped like stags,
Comrade with comrade.
They had forgotten
The mud and death,
The heat and flies
Of the plain of Troy.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ROSE-FLOWER.

There among them
Came a prince in scarlet,
With his hands stretched
In welcoming.
It was Paris, his friend,
Paris whom he killed
In the midnight raid
Beneath Troy wall.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Paris cried,
"Nireus, my comrade,
Nireus, my beloved,
My friend of old!
Here we have forgiven
What my young man's folly bred
We feast as friends
In the violet fields."

ROSE-FLOWER.

Then he led Nireus
To the hall of feasting.
There they feasted
In the violet fields.
Three summer days and nights
It seemed, they feasted,
Each summer day and night
Was ten years long.

TOGETHER.

Paris and the heroes
Cried to Nireus,
"We loved Helen,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

When we were men.
Now we love her still
And we see her lonely,
Old, and haunted
By her lovers dead.

"Take to Helen
Gifts from her lovers,
In her old age find her
And give her these:
Beauty and peace
And our forgiveness,
And all our thanks
For what she was."

MOON-BLOSSOM.

As they ceased speaking
They faded from him,
The island faded,
Nireus was at sea.
He and his men
Were all grown old,
Thirty years
Had fallen on them.

TOGETHER.

As old men failing
They came to Sparta;
All unavailing
Their coming was.
Helen was gone
And none knew whither,
To search for peace
Or to find release.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PROPHET.

True, he is in God's hands. Who sent him there?

AIAB.

I know not, Prophet, but if he be there,
He will be much at peace.

PROPHET.

You fiend of hell!
You, who hath murdered Naboth, to exult
Over his corpse, still bleeding as it is.

AIAB.

I have not murdered Naboth, nor do know
That he is dead, nor how, nor why. Explain.

PROPHET.

You damned him to be stoned for blasphemy.

AIAB.

I, do you say?

PROPHET.

Yes, you; or if not you,
Your bloody-hearted hirelings and the priests.

AIAB.

The priests alone can judge of blasphemy.
Which do you call my hirelings?

PROPHET.

The accursed
Idolaters who follow on your Queen.

(Enter JEZEBEL.)

JEZEBEL.

I am the Queen. Where is the man who dares
Call those who follow me accurst?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PROPHET.

Here, devil.

Here is the man who dares call you and them
Accurst as murderers of Naboth dead.

AHAB.

You say that priests condemned him for blaspheming.

PROPHET.

You stirred the priests to prosecuting him.

AHAB.

No, not in any way soever, Prophet.

PROPHET.

Then you, co-devil with him, did this thing.

JEZEBEL.

Hearken, old ruffian, and be warned by Naboth.
He cursed his God and King here in my presence,
Breaking the kingdom's laws of blasphemy.
I, who uphold this kingdom's laws, gave order
That he should be arraigned for blasphemy.
Do I conclude that there are still some men
Who do their ruler's bidding in this kingdom?

AHAB.

He was arraigned, condemned, and stoned?

PROPHET.

He was.

JEZEBEL.

So perish all such breakers of the law.

PROPHET.

Easily spoken words for King and Queen;
And easy laws for King and Queen to keep,
Living in purple in the ivory room;

A KING'S DAUGHTER

And useful laws for killing enemies.
But there other laws which do persist
After the enemies are killed. For Naboth
We left his body lying on its face,
And the wild dogs slink in and lick his blood;
And the bald birds that watch in heaven for deaths
Settle, and wait until the dogs have done.
But . . . as those dogs and buzzards come to Naboth,
The dogs and kites of vengeance come to you.
I tell you this . . .
Since you have sold yourself thus to work evil,
I will bring evil on you, take away
All your posterity, and make your house
Like Jeroboam's house,
And like the accursed house, Baasha's house.
Those of your house that die within the city
The dogs shall eat, and those that die afield
The fowls of the air shall eat; and Jezebel . . .
Dogs shall eat Jezebel by the city wall.
Now royal rottenness in purple hedged,
I call a great cry from the Spirit of God.
Come all you dogs and vultures,
Come on your noiseless wings out of great Heaven,
Come upon padding footsteps stealthily.
Follow your victims in the hearts of men,
And by the ways of men, and take their blood
As they took his, as they took his, as they
Took his, upon the stones; blood, blood, that shrieks.
(The spirit passes out of him. He swoons.)

AHAB.

So, Jezebel, you see what you have done.

JEZEBEL.

Would you have pardoned Naboth, had you heard him?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

AHAB.

No; but to give our enemies this handle
Against us, at this time, and for no reason.

JEZEBEL.

The laws are plain: would you have pardoned him?

AHAB.

I tell you, no.

JEZEBEL.

Then what would you have done?

AHAB.

Made him a mocking, or imprisoned him,
Or had him publicly displayed and shamed.

JEZEBEL.

Why did you not then do as you have said?
I told you plainly of the need of action.
One of us rulers had to play the King
And check this rebel. Since you did not, I did.
And he is checked for ever, and his friends
Daunted: so daunted that you have the chance
Now to take hold and be indeed the King,
And rule according to your royal will,
Not as the frenzy of a rebel bids.

AHAB.

This thing that you have done has ruined all
The little chance I had of governing.
You bring me to the pitch of having to choose
Between your fancies and the people's will.
Perhaps it is too late to remedy
The evil that must follow from your folly.
Naboth is dead: this prophet shows our future
If there be any future left for us.
Do not now answer me; I must debate this

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Within myself. You may have ruined me,
But that or no, you have been mad, by Heaven.

(Exit AHIAB.)

JEZEBEL.

How blest to be a prophet, who forever
Does but condemn another man's endeavour.
How blest, not to decide, nor be, nor do,
But help the many to condemn the few.

(Enter JORAM.)

Joram, my son, do you come to comfort your mother?

JORAM.

No, mother, I do not. I come to look for my father.

JEZEBEL.

If you are looking for the King, this is the King.

JORAM.

What is this body, Madam? The prophet? Is he dead?

JEZEBEL.

Only swooned from cursing your father and mother.

JORAM.

Mother, you are talking very strangely.

JEZEBEL.

I have been mad, by Heaven. Why, Joram, you come to
tell my father so; do you not, boy?

JORAM.

I do not know how to answer you.

JEZEBEL.

You reckon me a curse upon this country?

JORAM.

As my father's officer I have to report what the citizens
feel.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

You feel it with them.

JORAM.

Whatever I feel I can restrain; but since you insist, I say that it is hard that my father should be ruined by your Syrian policy and gods and self.

JEZEBEL.

You are half-Syrian.

JORAM.

Through you, I was. But in this war, while I lay wounded, a Syrian trooper kicked me and spurred me in the face. That took my last drop of Syrian blood; your blood. There is nothing Syrian in me now. But I mean to pay the Syrians for that kicking and spurring when they lie wounded. You have made father mild and Ahaziah like yourself; but after them perhaps I shall be King; perhaps sooner.

JEZEBEL.

You are leagued with your father's enemies. And do you think that they will make you the King?

JORAM.

It is not a question of what I think, but of the needs of this land.

JEZEBEL.

When the mob comes to sack the palace, there is always some prince to open the door.

JORAM.

If I ever am the King, the Syrians will see.

JEZEBEL.

May it be long before you become King.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JORAM.

Your killing Naboth may make it very long. But I am not here to talk with you, but with the King.

JEZEBEL.

As I told you, this is the King, here on the ground.

(Enter AHAB.)

JORAM.

Save you, O King, I bring a message from the Council.

AHAB.

What is it?

JORAM.

Something that would be better said by Ahaziah than myself.

AHAB.

Let me hear it.

JORAM.

If I did not bring it as a message, it would be my duty as your officer to bring it as a report.

JEZEBEL.

The Council sends word by your son that you, the King, should banish the Queen.

JORAM.

Madam, do not add to the pain of my mission. The Council is composed of manly and godly men, the best of our country, whose wills are worth the weighing. They bid me say, sir, this, that they deplore that such a King should have for counsellor one who brings peace with Syria, and the death of an upright man whom they esteemed.

AHAB.

By this counsellor they mean your mother, the Queen?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JORAM.

Sir, you are ever wise and they ever respectful. They feel that a foreign influence is not for your people's good, nor for justice in your people's causes.

JEZEBEL.

My son, speak openly, for the people's good.

AHAB.

What do they demand?

JORAM.

They bid me say, sir, that they cannot doubt that you would care only for your people's good, were it made apparent.

JEZEBEL.

Make it apparent.

JORAM.

Sire, I would that the prince, my brother, might have had this task.

JEZEBEL.

I, too, wish that, my son. Is not banishment enough, then? Do they ask for my death?

JORAM.

Sir, those are their feelings.

AHAB.

They hate my Queen and wish her gone?

JORAM.

Sir, truth cannot be hidden from you.

AHAB.

And if I ignore their feelings, or crush their mutterings?

JORAM.

Sir, they think you too great a man, for either way.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

AHAB.

But if they err, and I do?

JORAM.

You would not.

AHAB.

If I did, what then?

JORAM.

Your Majesty has too good a memory.

AHAB.

What do you mean by that, boy?

JORAM.

Sir, your father only came to the crown because a former King ignored men's feelings. King Nadab ignored his subjects' feelings. What happened to him? King Elah did. What happened to him? King Zimri did. What happened to him? Men now living saw all these Kings; and what came to them? The crown is granted on certain terms, according with the Life of this Race. My father, I beseech you, think what this Race asks.

AHAB.

I never cease to think it. Leave us.

(Exit JORAM.)

You heard what he said?

JEZEBEL.

Yes.

AHAB.

They want me to put you aside.

JEZEBEL.

Yes, Ahab.

AHAB.

What urged you to prosecute Naboth at such a time?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

Someone had to act.

AHAB.

You acted fatally.

JEZEBEL.

I was myself, Ahab; a princess of Sidon; your Queen.

AHAB.

This is not Sidon, but Shemer.

JEZEBEL.

I will not plead for your forgiveness, then.
Dismiss me from your council and your court
And let me be; the hated foreign woman
Who tried and failed. I will be nothing here.
After these years of hatred it will be
Peace to be nothing. When my son returns,
(The captain, Ahaziah) send him hence.
I sent for him to help me govern here.
Since I am nothing now, he must not stay.
But now that I am nothing, I say this:
That you must be upon your guard, King Ahab;
More, you must play the King, and being King,
Strike down this prophet and his friend, Lord Jehu,
For they are linked together against peace.

AHAB.

What proofs have you?

JEZEBEL.

A woman has no proofs,
Only an instinct fortified by love
Stronger than any proof.

AHAB.

And I have knowledge.
Jehu has been my captain of the horse,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

My comrade in the field, my counsellor,
My soldier, who has shed his blood for me
In five campaigns, in many years of war.
This prophet is indeed the enemy
Of much that I have planned, but as for Jehu,
I know him, and I know that you have wronged him
And speak from bitterness.

JEZEBEL.

Ahab, beware!

By all our lives together, you beware
Of Jehu and this man.

AHAB.

Had I been ware of you, Queen Jezabel,
Many years sooner, I had had no need
To be aware of any of my subjects.
I cannot longer countenance your dealings.
They neither suit my people nor the time. Therefore
I do dismiss you from your royalty,
From Queenship and command and counselling,
From all authority in Shemer here.
This shall be straightway published as my will.

PROPHET.

The messenger that spoke through me has gone,
And I am cold and broken as with blows,
But yet I hear—can you not hear—do you?

AHAB.

What should we hear, old ruffian from the desert?

PROPHET.

The wings descending and the footsteps coming.
The vultures and the dogs coming for blood.
Listen! The vultures settle in the court,
And there are footsteps coming up the stair,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

The footsteps of the dogs that come for blood;
For blood is coming upon this house, and I
Have told you that it comes; I am its herald.

(Enter JEHU from in front, carrying armour. He comes on, stands motionless, then flings down a helmet; then, after a pause, a corselet; then, after a pause, a sword. ZAKKUR stands behind him.)

AHAB.

What does your coming with these weapons mean?
Whose weapons are they? What has happened, Jehu?
Is it some challenge? Speak!

JEZEBEL.

I know that sword.

It's Ahaziah's sword. My son is dead?

(JEHU nods.)

AHAB.

What? Ahaziah dead? How did he die?

JEHU.

While he was riding here, he made a halt,
To rest his horses, at the inn at Springs;
And leaning on the lattice, looking out,
He fell out of the upper balcony,
And died soon after, broken by the fall.
Here is the witness, who will tell you how.

AHAB.

Speak, then, and tell the tale. How could he fall?

ZAKKUR.

By treachery, by Syrian treachery.
Lord, when our Queen commanded the Prince to return
here, she sent her orders by a Syrian of the Court.

JEZEBEL.

I did, by Malik.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ZAKKUR.

Malik was in the pay of the King of Syria.

JEZEBEL.

That is false. That lie has been exposed many times over.

ZAKKUR.

Madam, alas, it is now proven, by Malik's confession.

AHAB.

Who are you who speak?

ZAKKUR.

A lieutenant in our late Prince's troop, my lord.

AHAB.

Go on, then, about Malik.

ZAKKUR.

Before delivering his orders to our late Prince, he showed them to the Syrian officers in the garrison at Ramoth. They saw a chance of intercepting our Prince upon his way. They bribed Malik to lead the Prince, so as to halt at the inn at Springs. They did not wish to set upon him, because they expected the troop to be with the Prince. They sawed through the beams of the balcony of the inn so that when he set foot upon it, the floor should give way. The Prince did not bring his troop with him, but set out with myself, his galloper, and Malik. He halted at the inn, at Malik's persuasion, much against his will, for he wished to be here. Then all happened as his murderers the Syrians had devised. He went upon the balcony, it fell, and he died from it.

After he had died, my lord, Malik urged us to come away, which I and my colleague would not, without examination. When we found that the beams had been sawn, remembering Malik's Syrian birth and his suspicious wishes, first to

A KING'S DAUGHTER

halt there, then to come away, we taxed him with the crime and he confessed, and was secured.

The galloper waits at the inn for an escort for the body and the prisoner. It was decided that I should ride here at once with the news.

JEZEBEL.

Before he died, did he say anything?

ZAKKUR.

Yes, Madam; he muttered about the gods, and about you.

JEZEBEL.

What did he say?

ZAKKUR.

That we were to tell you that this was the gods' reward for peace with Syria.

JEZEBEL.

Since he is dead, wisdom and peace are dead!

(She goes out.)

AHAB.

God, thou hast faced me with my sin this day.
My son, who was to follow me as King,
Killed by a Syrian plot, by treachery.
Killed, coming home to help me in my sorrows.

PROPHET.

Killed by your treachery, that made the peace
With Syria, against God's ordinance.

JEHU.

Nothing that has been done by Syria
Against this land can rank beside this deed;
The loss of such a Prince by such a crime
Will rouse this country, lord. You will keep peace
By your great policy, but through your people
A mighty cry for vengeance will arise.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

AHAB.

And not unheeded, Jehu. Listen, all.
This was his sword. He was to be the King
After my death, fulfilling all my dreams.
See, you, and you, and you, I take the sword
And draw it out and swear upon its hilt
To take a vengeance on the murderers
Who brought him to his death.

JEHU.

Well sworn, O King!

PROPHET.

Surely the Spirit of God is working in you!

AHAB.

Wait yet, O Prophet; though my heart is sick
At having trusted in my enemies,
And been ill-paid, I will ask help from God;
Counsel and help in any act of justice.
Go, gather me the prophets, let them seek
Illumination, then bring word to me
Whether the spirit do approve a war.
I will go seek for guidance, though my heart
Seeks less for guidance now than for release.

JEHU.

Lord, all true hearts commiserate your grief.

AHAB.

Thank you, good Jehu.

(Exit AHAB.)

ZAKKUR.

Well, he took the story.

JEHU.

Yes, as I knew he would. The score's one each.
He has won Naboth, I have Ahaziah.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PROPHET.

Was not the story true?

JEHU.

The Prince is dead,
So much is true; and in an hour from now
We can be marching hence with Ahab's self,
If all your prophets will but prophesy.
I want him killed in war, outside the city.
Go, bid the prophets prophesy for war.
(*Exit* PROPHET, *with* ZAKKUR.)

JEHU.

So, Ahaziah, you were rude to me.
Princes should not be rude to rising men,
For men may rise. You will be rude no more.
I have been rude to you, my Ahaziah.
I kicked the lips that once were rude to me.
My foot is on your heart's blood, Ahaziah.

CURTAIN.

FIFTH CHORUS

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Full of years and wealth and evil, Menelaus died in
Sparta,
And Queen Helen at his bedside stood and looked
upon him dead,
He who once had bought her beauty, to be bride to him,
by barter,
He whom she had loathed and fled from, now lay
silenced on the bed.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ROSE-FLOWER.

Bitter thoughts were in her as she looked upon his
 meanness,
Thoughts of Paris in his beauty when their love was at
 its height.
Paris in his morning, and the King in his uncleanness,
 And this dead mean thing, her master, and the winner
 of the fight.

TOGETHER.

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the soft-foot watchers whispering;
 All was dark, save in the porch
 The wind-blown fire of a torch,
And the sentries still as in a stound,
With their spear-heads drooped upon the ground.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Then she thought: "These two men had me, and a
 myriad men have sickened
To a fever of a love for me who saw me passing by:
When they saw me, all their eyes grew bright, and all
 their pulses quickened,
And to win me or to keep me they went up to Troy to
 die.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

"Now the earthly moon, my beauty, and the rose, my
 youth, have dwindled.
I am old, my hair is grey, and none remembers
What a fire in men's hearts Queen Helen kindled
Ere the fire in Queen Helen turned to embers."

TOGETHER.

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the wind-blown torch-flame guttering,
 And a moth that came

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Beating with his wings about the flame,
And the sentries drawing breath,
With their spear-heads drooped saluting death.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Then she said: "The gods conspired to give gifts of
beauty to me,
And the beauty gave the gift of death to all who came to
woo me;

Now of all the men who loved me, none remain,
And of both the men who had me neither knew me
Surely all my past was evil, for its fruit is bitter pain.

ROSE-FLOWER.

"I will go to some lone island where I am not made a
story,
Where my beauty made no widow, nor no orphan
wanting bread;
Where no human sorrow suffers the disaster of my glory,
And my eyes may lose the vision of the hauntings of
the dead."

MOON-BLOSSOM.

"Day and night the dead men haunt me, whom the
madness of my caring
Brought from home and wives and children to be bones
upon the plain;
All the panther-like for beauty, all the lion-like for daring,
And they lie among the bindweed now, uncovered by
the rain."

TOGETHER.

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the soft-foot watchers whispering;
All was dark, save in the porch
The wind-blown fire of a torch,
And the sentries still as in a stound
With their spear-heads drooped upon the ground.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Then she rose, and cloaked her face, and hurried swiftly
from the city,
And to sea, away from Hellas, but she dared not show
her face,
For the women and the orphans would have killed her
without pity:
She had sown her crop of death too far, she found no
resting-place.
But in inns where people gathered in the evenings after
labour,
Where the shepherd's pipe or viol stirred the blind
man to his verse,
Till the hearers swayed and trembled and the rough man
touched his neighbour,
They would talk of Troy with sadness, but of Helen
with a curse.

SIXTH CHORUS

MOON-BLOSSOM.

After long years, when Helen was riding by night
In storm, in the Ida forest, alone, not knowing the road,
She saw a light in the blackness; she turned to the light,
She came to the fort on the crag, the panther-women's
abode.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Hearing her horse's stamp, they brought her into the
yard,
Those women fierce from the killing of lion or boar or
man;
They came with their torches round her, they stared at
her hard,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

They knew her for Helen the Queen from whom their sorrows began.

For years they had longed for her coming, to have her to kill,

Her beauty a throat for their knives, her body a prey—

Helen, who ruined their lovers, the root of their ill—

She said: "I am Helen. Avenge yourselves on me. You may."

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Still they stared at her there in the torchlight; then one of them said:

"God used you to bring things to be; evil things to our city,

Evil things to yourself, for your face declares you have paid;

You have come to the truth like ourselves; we take not vengeance, but pity."

Then they welcomed her into their hold, and when morning broke clear,

They rode with her down to the ruins of what had been Troy;

There they left her alone in the wreck of the thing overdear

That the gods cannot grant to mankind, but unite to destroy.

FOURTH ACT

JEZEDEL.

I shall not look upon my son again!
How many million mothers must have felt
As I, with a dead child. How many lives
Have been made lightless thus.
For no child ever dies without the breaking
Of someone's heart.
And yet the world goes on.
I shall go on, perhaps for many years,
And in my heart's most secret corridor
Will be a shrine, where I shall watch my son,
Lonely as Helen in her tower at Troy
When Paris had been killed.
Would I had been beside him when he fell,
And fallen with him to the pit of death!
Better die so, not mangled in the war,
A young man, beautiful in youth, as thou wert;
Not troubled yet by life; not yet a King;
Thou hast been only young and now art dead.

With all life's faults, I want you back in life,
Not dead, my son, beyond my touch and speech,
But here, moving and speaking, being mine.
My help and stay and wisdom and assuagement
As in the past. You, who gave no farewell,
Speak to me from the grave, O lovely son.

(There is a sighing)

Was that an answer from the dead, or birds
Flying away before the winter comes?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

My son, if you are there, speak to my spirit.

(There is a sighing.)

What message do you bring, that you are here?

What do you come to tell me?

THE VOICE.

Death.

JEZEBEL.

What?

THE VOICE.

Death.

JEZEBEL.

Whose death? Mine? Or your father's? Or the kingdom's?

My son's soul was within this room and speaking.

O speak again, say something, give me proof

That you are linked still by dear love to me. Hark!

Hush!

No. There was no voice speaking; nor will be.

(AHAZIAH appears.)

My boy! My son!

AHAZIAH.

Mother!

JEZEBEL.

My child! My dear!

AHAZIAH.

Listen. I cannot say it all. The flowers

Speak truth. You all are coming.

JEZEBEL.

Then, beloved,

We shall soon meet again, and part no more.

AHAZIAH.

Mother, I struggle back to tell you this:

It is most hard to come, most hard to speak.

**You must with all your power strive to cut
These nets.**

What are these nets?

The nets of death,
That are all round you like a hunter's toils.

Do you mean civil war? Or war with Syria?

**That is not what I mean; but someone near you.
Someone about you has most deadly hands,
A hangman's hands; and you must break his hands.**

Who is it, that is deadly? Is it Joram?

I cannot speak his name, but, mother, hark!
He murdered me; I never saw his face,
He killed me at the inn.

Jehu, you mean?

The man forever looking at the throat,
Whose fingers twitch; a red-eyed man it is,
I cannot speak the name.

Oh, it is Jehu!

And Jehu murdered you?

There's danger, mother;
Avoid the nets. I cannot make you see them.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

Jehu is spreading nets of treachery?

AHAZIAH.

The flowers speak truth; the flowers and the rod,
The riding rod.

(He goes.)

JEZEBEL.

Oh, speak! O my dear son,
How can I help, I being Queen no longer,
But banished and condemned? What can I do?
And what is this of riding rods and flowers?

(There is a sighing.)

My son is gone into the night of Death,
And Jehu murdered him in ways unknown.
Would I could prove the crime!

(Enter MICAHIAH.)

MICAHIAH.

Madam, a rider from the inn at Springs
Has brought these flowers, gathered by the Prince
Your son, now dead.

JEZEBEL.

The flowers that speak truth;
Was there no other relic but the flowers?

MICAHIAH.

Yes, Madam, this; a staff or riding rod,
Left on the flowers, so the rider said.

JEZEBEL.

A riding rod! And do you know the rod?

MICAHIAH.

Madam, I do. It is Lord Jehu's staff.

JEZEBEL.

What brought it to the inn at Springs, Micajah?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MICAIAH.

I do not know. The rider found it there.

JEZEBEL.

Where is the rider who delivered these?

MICAIAH.

Gone, Madam; he preferred not to be known.

JEZEBEL.

I see you have suspicions; let me know them.

MICAIAH.

Madam, this staff was in Lord Jehu's hand
This morning, when I saw him here at court.

JEZEBEL.

That, or one like it? Could you swear to that?

MICAIAH.

He held this staff. He stopped me in the square
About a warrant, and I noticed it.
This little scratch is unmistakable.

JEZEBEL.

And what can you conclude from this, Micaiah?

MICAIAH.

That the Lord Jehu hurried to the Springs,
After I saw him, and then hurried back.

JEZEBEL.

What duty could have taken him to Springs?

MICAIAH.

Madam, he had no duty there. I asked.

JEZEBEL.

Might not a messenger have gone from him
Bearing his staff?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MICAH.

Madam, he went himself.

The warden at the west gate saw him start
In that direction, and return from thence
Three hours later. He was back by noon.

JEZEBEL.

So that he would have been at Springs, perhaps,
Before Prince Ahaziah halted there?

MICAH.

Perhaps.

JEZEBEL.

Yet not "perhaps"; he would have been there.
He must have been there at the very time.

MICAH.

Madam, I dare not utter thoughts like these.

JEZEBEL.

Yet Jehu could not know that he was coming
Home from the frontier, or would pass by Springs.

MICAH.

So please you, Madam, but the fact was known
Publicly in the city everywhere.
The knowledge was abroad, I know not how.
You are beset by watchers, and by traitors.

JEZEBEL.

And murderers and friends of murderers.
Jehu waylaid my son and murdered him.
By these poor relics sacred with his blood
I will denounce him to the King myself,
Or lay him dead before me with my hands.

(She gathers the relics.)

MICAH.

Lie there, sad relic of a glorious youth.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ZIKRI (*entering*).

Make ready for the utterance of the Prophet!

KALLAI (*entering*).

Bow down before the Prophet, bringer of truth!

(*Enter the PROPHET.*)

PROPHET.

I am bringer of Truth out of the hidden,
I am finder of ways where footing is sure,
I am sword and shield against things forbidden.
I am brightness to guide, healing to cure;

Mine are the words that endure.

I, now, about to declare as the Spirit orders,
Cry, let women avoid, let children hide,
Let none but spearmen be here, the city's warders.
I speak, out of the Truth, words that abide.
Men only may hear what might of men must decide.

(JEZEBEL *veils and goes.*)

(*Enter JORAM, then JEHU, then AHAB, preceded by SPEARMEN.*)

AHAB.

Now that the revelation is vouchsafed,
Stand, all, before this Prophet, who has seen
Light in the darkness that has blinded us.

PROPHET.

Hearken, O King, to revelation's self.
The spirit says, "Go up against the Syrians;
At Ramoth-Gilead you shall conquer them."
See here these horns of iron that I wear.
The spirit says, "With these horns shalt thou push
The Syrians, until they be consumed."

JEHU.

Good messages, good omens, good foretellings.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

AHAB.

May they prove good.

JORAM.

The spirit filled the prophets with a glory
Marvellous to watch and hear: they spoke as one.

MICAHIAH.

Not quite as one, Prince Joram and my King.
One was not filled with spirit.

AHAB.

Who is this?

MICAHIAH.

I am Micaiah, lord, who have been counted
A seer, too, at times.

AHAB.

Oh, it is you!
Honest Micaiah, who must speak the truth.
I hate this man; he prophesies not good
But evil of me.

JEHU.

These fellows are too ready with their evil.

PHARMAS (*to MICAHIAH*).

See now, the prophets foretell victory,
With one mouth; say the same; cry victory.

MICAHIAH.

As the Lord lives I'll speak what the Lord says.

AHAB.

Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-Gilead
To battle, or forbear?

MICAHIAH.

Go, lord, and prosper,
The Lord shall make it yours.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

AHAB.

How many times
Shall I adjure you that you speak the truth,
Speak nothing but the truth.

JORAM.

I'd have a way to make him speak the truth,
Two troopers with a pair of stirrup leathers
To teach his obstinate jaw some reverence.

AHAB.

Peace, Joram; let him speak.

MICAHAIH.

Sir, I will speak.
In dreams, last night, in the dark night, ere cocks
crowed,
I saw a downland empty to the sky.

JORAM.

That is the way these fellows use to talk;
They'd talk another way, had I my will.

MICAHAIH.

And suddenly I saw all Israel
Scattered upon that downland frantically,
Like sheep without a shepherd. The Lord said:
"These have no master now; let them go home."

AHAB.

And how do you interpret this your dream?

MICAHAIH.

That if you go this warfare, you, the master
Of Israel, will die.

AHAB.

How die?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MICAIAH.

I do not know.

JEHU.

You mean, in battle?

MICAIAH.

By violence.

JORAM.

That means in battle, surely?

MICAIAH.

Not necessarily.

JEHU.

How else, then, man?

MICAIAH.

I do not know. Perhaps by treachery.

JEHU.

We will protect the King from treachery.

JORAM (*to MICAIAH*).

Except such treachery as men like you
Think in their hearts and utter in big words,
Trying to wreck the State.

AHAB.

Did I not say
That he would utter evil about me?

JORAM.

These fellows need a bit within their jaws.

MICAIAH.

My Prince, no bit can stop the telling truth.

PROPHET.

What do you know of truth, idolater?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MICAH.

Nothing. I know that certain things are true.

JEHU.

Fine talk, to keep the army lingering.

AHAB.

Have you some other vision to reveal?

MICAH.

A sort of vision.

PROPHET.

Ay, a sort of vision.

There is one way of vision, only one,
Vouchsafed to men, you false one, with false gods.

AHAB.

What is this vision? Will it lighten me?

MICAH.

It is of you and of the prophet tribe.

PROPHET.

Some blasphemy. Take heed to what he says.

MICAH.

In the dark night I saw this other thing:
I saw the Lord in heaven on his throne,
With all the host of heaven standing by him.
He said, "Who shall persuade King Ahab to go up
And die at Ramoth-Gilead?" They discussed it.
At last a spirit said, "I will persuade him."
The Lord said, "How?"
The spirit said, "I will go forth and be
A lying spirit in his prophets' mouths."
And the Lord said, "Thou shalt. Go forth and do so."
Behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit
Into thy prophets' mouths, and spoken evil
Not good to you.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PROPHET.

You think God's truth has passed from me to you.
When did it pass, and how?

MICAH.

You will know that
When you shall go into an inner chamber
To hide yourself.

AHAB.

Carry this fellow to the Governor,
And have him into prison in the dark,
And let his bread and drink be bitterness
Until I come in peace.

MICAH.

If you return at all
In peace, the spirit has not spoken by me.
Hearken, O people, every one of you.

AHAB.

Have him away.

MICAH.

Which story is the likelier to be true,
Mine, which when told brings prison, or this fellow's,
Which earns the King's reward? The truth is dangerous.

JORAM.

You'll find this dangerous. Away with him!
(He is dragged out.)

JEHU.

That shows how close your enemies can come.
Even to your very court.

JORAM.

He should be silenced.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

AHAB.

He is a gallant fellow, without judgment.
But he presumes too much, he and his dreams.

PROPHET (*crying aloud*).

O King, a vision is vouchsafed to me!
I see! I see! Hearken to what I see.
I see a red bull trampling down God's foes;
He neezes fire and all his fell is fire;
His shoulder is a mountain rough with forest;
His eye the wrath of God; he stamps the cities.
Go up against the Syrians, like this bull.

JORAM.

There is the voice of God.

JEHU.

Ay, truly, Prince.

AHAB.

Since God declares that we should make this war,
Which we, as men, have shrunk from hitherto,
Although provoked by countless insolence,
Now hearken to the utterance of the crown.

(*Enter JEZEBEL.*)

JEZEBEL.

Ay, hearken to the utterance of the crown.
You are all come to hear a war declared.
Now I, the crown, declare it unto you.
I declare war upon our enemies.
They are all present, standing in this place,
Waiting the execution of our sword.
(*To PROPHET.*) This man, the madman from the desert,
first,
Who rages like a desert-storm, that kills
With sand, burning hot sand, pitiless sand.
(*To JORAM.*) This next, the haler of his house, our son,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Who, for a wound that pains him would be glad
That thousand others should be sick with wounds.
(To JEHU.) Then, next, this other man, not mad not sick,
Not even suspected; honoured, trusted, loved.
This man, the rider to the inn at Springs,
For secret evil. Hark! This man, King Ahab,
Murdered our son and plots to murder you.
Seize him, King Ahab, ere it be too late.

AHAB.

Murdered our son? But this is childishness.

JEZEBEL.

No, I bring proof; the rod, the rod he holds,
Was found at Springs, to prove that he was there.

JEHU.

This rod, good Madam?

JEZEBEL.

Even that very rod.

AHAB.

Who found it at the Springs? Who brought it here?

JEZEBEL.

A rider, lord, who gave it to Micaiah.

JORAM.

What rider?

AHAB.

Yes, what rider, can you tell?

JEZEBEL.

One who would not be known, Micaiah said.

AHAB.

Micaiah! He?

JORAM.

The man imprisoned here.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEHU.

My lord, I grieve less at this ill suspicion
Than at the sad disaster which has caused it.

JEZEBEL.

You killed my son most foully at the inn;
You were seen riding thither before noon,
And left your rod there while you did the deed,
Upon these flowers which my son had gathered;
These desert flowers.

JEHU.

My Lord and King, I can most clearly prove
That I was at my quarters all the morning.
This rod I missed this morning from my quarters
And found it here on entering but now.
Prince Joram saw me find it as I entered.

JORAM.

That is most true; I did.
Mother, you should not be here; come away.

JEZEBEL.

My lord, my King, my husband, listen to me.
You know me, whether I am mad or no.
I am not mad; but Ahaziah's spirit
Came to me here, stood where his murderer stands,
Less than an hour ago, denouncing him,
His murderer, and traitor to yourself.
I, knowing this, see to the soul of things,
And cry, if you be man, attack this traitor,
Tear out his wicked plottings and destroy him.

AHAB.

Let the Queen's women come. I hear your charges
Brought with more passion than with evidence.
These are our friends, our proven soldier, Jechu,
Our son, and this, the prophet of the spirit,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Not what you think. See, here your women come.
Tend the Queen's majesty to her apartments.

JEZEBEL.

You think me mad, my inmost wisdom, mad.
For the last time, for Ahaziah's sake,
For your sake, for the kingdom, for the crown,
And for the sake of God who gives the crown,
Believe what I have said against this Jehu.

AHAB.

I grieve that anyone should bring such charges.
That you should bring them is an anguish to me.
Go with your women hence, and try to rest.

JEZEBEL.

Prince Joram, will you give me your support?
Thank you, my son.

Since no one will believe,

I, here, the Queen, must act alone. I will.

(She snatches JORAM's knife and tries to kill JEHU.)

Die, murderer of my son!

JORAM *(catching her)*.

I thought you'd try it.

But I was ready for you. Come now, mother,
You must go, rest. Come help her there, you women.

(JEZEBEL is helped off.)

It is my brother's death that makes her thus.

AHAB.

It shakes us all. You understand, Duke Jehu,
The cause of this, without my saying more.

JEHU.

My lord, I understand.
But yet suggest some trial or enquiry
Into my dealings.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

AHAB.

Do not think of it.
For these unhappy things which bruise men's hearts
Tear women's hearts across. Let us proceed.
I declare war against the Syrians
For breach of treaty. We will march at once.

JORAM.

Though wounded, I will march, for I'll repay
The Syrians what I owe. Come, prophet, spread
The news throughout the city.

PROPHET.

I will declare God's wrath against his enemies.
(JORAM and PROPHET go.)

AHAB.

Stay, Jehu, yet. You heard Micaiah's dream.
That was an evil omen for our war.

JEHU.

I do not think so. Why, what was the dream?
That there should seem to be no King to-day.
Was not that it? The meaning is apparent:
That you should wear disguise.

AHAB.

Ha! Well suggested.

JEHU.

It is a wise precaution at the least.
Some traitor may be plotting to destroy you,
Some Syrian assassin may be here.
So take Micaiah's hint and wear no purple.

AHAB.

A good interpretation. I accept it
So. I will march disguised.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEHU.

Much better so.

AHAB.

Micaiah did interpret for my death.

JEHU.

These thinkers are the enemies of war
Because they are afraid. He wished to scare you,
Let me unclasp the buckle of your cloak.
Much wiser give no target to these archers;
Wear the plain armour of a charioteer.

AHAB.

I will, Duke Jehu. Lie you there, my purple,
Till I return to-night with victory.
At sunset every night the Queen and I
Go through the citron gardens to the kennels,
To feed our Hittite wolf-hounds with raw flesh.
To-night when we go feed them, we will go,
As conquerors of Syria, through the city.

(Exit AHAB.)

JEHU.

Right, my good Lord. Yes, you shall be disguised;
But this bright bird within the quiver here
Will pierce through your disguise before to-night,
And you shall feed the wolf-hounds, never fear;
So shall your Queen, with royal flesh and raw.

(He puts on the King's purple.)

Oh, out in the desert, my spear and my bow

Will win me whatever I need;

The wine and the oil that another did grow

And the horse that another did breed.

So away for the desert . . .

Ay, I have trotted in your bodyguard

Too long, by God!

CURTAIN.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

SEVENTH CHORUS

ROSE-FLOWER.

Queen Helen left those women of the wood,
She clambered from her horse and stood again
Even on the very hill where Troy had stood,
Where tamarisk shrubs and broom-sprigs and wild grain
Sprouted from bronze and rib-bones of men slain.

There was the palace where her love had been;
Stones blackened by the fire and misplac'd
By roots of vines that fed upon the paste
Of all the pride where she had lived a queen.

Troy was no more than weeds and fire-flaked stone,
But still the straits ran roaring to the south,
And still the never-quiet winds were blown
With scent of meadow-sweet from Simois' mouth.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Yet no Greeks were moving on the beaches,
No galleys of the Greeks came oaring in,
Nor did lancer scouts or parties ride the whin,
Bringing in or checking convoys from the river's upper
reaches
Where the forest pines begin.

And the forges were all gone, and all the fires
Of the camps and burnings of the dead.
And the grinding of the bronze-shod chariot-tyres
Rang no more.
Both in city and on shore
There were no more shouted orders, clash of arms, or
marchers' tread.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ROSE-FLOWER.

All was manless now, uncared for; both the streams had
left their courses.

There was marsh where corn had grown of old, and
there, where Paris lay,
Was an apple-tree with fruit which fed the now wild
Trojan horses,
That with bright teeth bit each other;
Earth made Greek and Trojan brother,
All the passion that had raged there now was dead and
gone away.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Then she cried, "I caused the quarrel that brought death
along these beaches,
I alone made Troy this ruin, I alone, from haste of
youth,
From a woman's bent, that listens to a lie, if it beseeches;
Now I stand here old and friendless, having nothing
but the truth."

ROSE-FLOWER.

There she stopped, for there before her, in the ruins,
stood a stranger;
"This is changed indeed," he told her, "since I stood
here once before:
Then it flamed all red to heaven and it rang with death
and danger,
And I stood here with noble Agamemnon,
In the thunder of the ending of the war."

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Something in the old man's bearing made her start and
catch her breath.
"You are Nireus, friend," she answered. "You are he
who brought me here
When my life and love were dear:

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Then I came to life and loving, now I come to grief and death.

"There is no small grass, in plain or water,
But grows from the body of one killed
By the deadly love of me, who am Helen, Leda's
daughter:
All the young and swift and lovely, all the quick of
heart are stilled;
I was cause of their going to the slaughter.

"Daylong and nightlong their shadows pursue me with
evil,
Haunting my thought in the day, killing my rest in the
night;
Now they have drawn me here: their multitudinous devil
Bids me die where I sinned.
I hear their cry in the wind,
I see their eyes in the light."

ROSE-FLOWER.

Nireus answered, "Ah, not thus, not so, Queen Helen,
surely,
Are those who died for love of you, to win you or to
keep!
If they gave their lives, they gave them as a man gives
frankly, purely,
Without question, comment or complaint,
The strong heart equal with the faint,
All content to see your beauty and to tread hard ways
to sleep.

"Now they know that your beauty made them splendid,
Splendid to the death; for I have seen,
Seen and talked, beloved Helen, with the souls of those
who ended

A KING'S DAUGHTER

In the ruins of this city that has been,
And they praise your name, they count you still their
Queen.

"Now come with me, for the ship waits to receive you,
The wind is fair for Syme; let us start.
Here, where long ago I lost you, I retrieve you;
Let us leave this town of broken heart
For the peace of Syme Harbour and the mirth of Syme
mart,
And the calm of knowing sorrow at an end,
And the quiet of the memory of a friend."

TOGETHER.

Then they sailed for Syme Island, and the gods were
with their going,
For their beauty came upon them both, with youth
and strength and peace;
Now they rule and live forever in a spring forever blow-
ing,
High in Syme where the sun is bright and skylarks
never cease.

FIFTH ACT.

ROSE-FLOWER.

There is no rider, coming from the army,
In sight yet, Madam. Shall we play again?

(No answer.)

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Come to the window. There. What white was that?

ROSE-FLOWER.

The wind lifting the dust.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

No. Yes, it was.

Dust from a windflaw blowing down the glen.

There is no rider, Madam. Shall we sing?

(No answer.)

ROSE-FLOWER.

She is too stunned with sorrow to give orders.

Shall we not sing to soothe her?

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Sing, then, you.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Speak to her first.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Madam——

ROSE-FLOWER.

She will not answer;

So speak some quiet thing.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Men are like wind-vanes that forever swing;
Men are like winds forever wavering;
Men are like water; men are like the tide:
Women, the rock they ebb from, do abide.

ROSE-FLOWER.

She will not speak. See, it is sunset now.
And now the drums begin upon the housetops
And all the plain spreads out, burningly clear.

JEZEBEL.

What is that noise of evil that I hear?

ROSE-FLOWER.

The prophet speaking in the market-place.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

All afternoon his voice has shouted evil.

JEZEBEL.

It is as red as blood within this room.
They have gone out to war; is it not so?
I have been thinking till it all seems plain.
We are amusements only
In mightier life than ours.
God knows, we are not amusement to ourselves
I am no Queen. I have no son; no husband;
No task, no place, and yet I covet news.
Look, by the rocks, beyond the spur; you see?

ROSE-FLOWER.

A rider.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

In a white cloak, with a lance.

ROSE-FLOWER.

One of King Ahab's lancers, if in white.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Surely a rider from the army, Madam.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Bringing good news, because he would not gallop
Save with the news of triumph.

JEZEBEL.

What he brings
Will not be what we look for, because life
Is unexpected, whether good or ill.
And at the door by which a horror enters.
Another comes, a muffled one, a silent.

(There is a knocking.)

Enter, without there!

(PHARMAS enters.)

Yes? What is it, Pharmas?

PHARMAS.

The Presence will forgive my interruption.
There is a woman in the outer court
Asks that you grant her audience for a moment.

JEZEBEL.

Why should I grant her audience? Who is she?

PHARMAS.

She comes from Lower Egypt, as she says.

JEZEBEL.

What is her traffic with me?

PHARMAS.

Madam, this.
She brings cosmetics and Arabian gums.

JEZEBEL.

This is no time for such. I cannot see her.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PHARMAS.

May the great Presence pardon if I speak.
I told her that you would not buy her gear
At such a time, but she implored me still
To beg you to admit her to your presence.

JEZEBEL.

Did she say why?

PHARMAS.

Yes, Madam; because once,
Many long years ago, she lived in Sidon,
Her father being sutler to the guard,
Your royal father's bodyguardsmen, Madam.
She says she looked upon your presence there
When you were a Princess. She does desire
To see that prophecy of future beauty
Fulfilled in you the Queen, if you the Queen
Would graciously permit her eyes to feast
Upon the sight of you.

JEZEBEL.

So our pasts come
To see what Time had made of us. So be it.
A word of Sidon would be beauty to me
To-day. Let her come in.

PHARMAS.

I will, O Splendour!

(Exit.)

ROSE-FLOWER.

Queen, is it wise to let a stranger come?

JEZEBEL.

No.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Then why see her?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ROSE-FLOWER.

Would it not be better
If, first, we questioned her?

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Or scarched for weapons?

ROSE-FLOWER.

She well might carry daggers.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Or bring poison.

JEZEBEL.

No; let her come. I am involved in nets
So close, that both the wise thing and unwise
Are cords to catch me.

ROSE-FLOWER.

She is here.

PHARMAS (*entering with HAMUTAL*).

This way.

Stand here until the Presence speaks to you.

(*Exit.*)

JEZEBEL.

They tell me that you lived in Sidon once.

HAMUTAL.

Yes, lady, yes. I passed my childhood there.

JEZEBEL.

So. In which street or quarter was your home?

HAMUTAL.

The twisted stinking quarter of the poor,
One where you never trod, near the fish-market.

JEZEBEL.

I trod there often, and its filthiest lane,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Silvered with cat-gnawn droppings of the nets,
Was blessed to me. It is blest in memory.

HAMUTAL.

Perhaps to others it is not so blest.
I know my father starved there; so did I.
That's past. The question now is, Is the man
Gone from the door?

JEZEBEL.

The man who brought you here?

Look!

ROSE-FLOWER (*looking*).

He has gone.

JEZEBEL.

Why should he not be gone?

HAMUTAL.

They are all spies here, every man of them.
And I have come here, Madam, to say this:
You are in instant danger of your life.

JEZEBEL.

From whom?

HAMUTAL.

I cannot say. I will not say.
I do not rightly know; but they are wicked—
Wicked and bold. Though others made them so.
I have come here to help you to escape.

JEZEBEL.

I thank you for the thought, but first convince me
That there is danger.
I have lived here in danger twenty years.
What horror comes to-day?

HAMUTAL.

Come to the window, Madam; but be hidden.
Look here. You see the side gate of the palace?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

You see, behind the ruined wall, armed men?
They watch that side gate lest you leave the palace.
Now, on this side, see there, among those bushes,
More men-at-arms, watching the royal gate.
There at the water-gate are more armed men.
And they are not your guards.

JEZEBEL.

I see they are not.
Then, while they watch for me, their friends are watching
My husband in the army? Is it so?

HAMUTAL.

No, do not ask me, Madam; I know nothing.

ROSE-FLOWER.

How could our Queen escape with the gates watched?
This is some treason, Madam, to betray you
Out of the palace, into savage hands.

JEZEBEL.

Let's see her face. Ah! no, she is not that.
Look, woman; many Queens have been betrayed
Since men were ruled; betrayed to death and shame,
Most foully, by their subjects, whom they trusted.
There is no treachery on earth more devilish
To brand men blacker or to rake the heart worse.
You would not be the one to tempt me forth
To death and shame among my enemies?

HAMUTAL.

Madam, I swear I would not.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

We could call
The palace guards.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Yes, call the palace guards and question her.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

HAMUTAL.

Come to the doorway, Madam.
You hear the sounds below? Your palace guards
Are being feasted by your enemies;
Women and drink have overcome your guards.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Then how can she escape?

HAMUTAL.

The little door—
The little, secret, unsuspected door
Under the stair, leads to a passage-way
Straight to the stables. I have brought the keys.

JEZEBEL.

You are my steward's wife, then? No one else
Could know about the door.

HAMUTAL.

Oh, hurry, hurry!
What matter who I am? You are the Queen.
You will find horses ready in the stables
For you and for your women. From the stables
You can escape, the postern is unlockt.

JEZEBEL.

And you?

What kind of life awaits you, after this?

HAMUTAL.

A better kind of life than you have made
For poor folk.

JEZEBEL.

Ah! fine words; but ten years hence,
Nay, two years, one year, hence, you will remember
My queenship as a dream, a golden dream.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

ROSE-FLOWER.

O Madam, take the keys; do not delay.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

The men outside are beating at the gate.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Look, Madam, they have scrambled from the bushes
And beat upon the bars.

HAMUTAL.

O Heaven! Hark!

JEZEBEL.

What is it?

HAMUTAL.

Listen! Listen!

Come from the door.

ROSE-FLOWER.

What did you think you heard?

HAMUTAL.

Come nearer me.

JEZEBEL.

I am not terrified?

Draw a deep breath and tell us what it is.

HAMUTAL.

I think that someone is outside the door,
Listening to what we say.

JEZEBEL.

Be still a moment.

HAMUTAL.

It is a man.

ROSE-FLOWER.

There is a noise of armour.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

MOON-FLOWER.

Someone is breathing deeply just outside.

HAMUTAL.

What shall I do? What shall I do? O Heaven!

JEZEBEL.

Help her to veil. Treat her as one of you;
Cover her features with the gossamer,
Now let her hurry to the passage yonder.

(Exit HAMUTAL.)

We will be ridded of uncertainty.

Is anyone behind the door there? Enter.

(She goes back and flings open the door. PASHUR is there.

He comes in.)

Who are you, fellow? And what brings you here?

PASHUR.

A messenger, with news. And who are you?

ROSE-FLOWER.

She is your Queen, so speak with reverence.

PASHUR.

A Queen! God spare us: soldiers own no Queen.
But you shall hear my story, Queen or no.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Is the King dead? Speak! Is King Ahab dead?

PASHUR.

Learn to respect a royal messenger.
Ay, it has been a hot day's work to-day.

JEZEBEL.

If you be from the King, tell us your story.

PASHUR.

Ay, I am from the King. That is God's truth.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

And I have ridden out, and fought, and ridden
Back to this city, and the whole world sways
As from the falling shoulders of a horse.

ROSE-FLOWER.

So the King lives! Thank God!

PASHUR.

Yes, the King lives.

And give God praise, because of victory.

JEZEBEL.

I give God praise.

PASHUR.

Queen, it has been a day.

Think for a moment what this day has been.

We marched this morning with our banners waving,

With the prophets raving, and the trumpets blowing,

With the charioteers of the King of Judah,

And the spears of the King, a thousand men.

We came to Ramoth when they least expected,

While they slept the noontide and thought it peace.

There we paid back upon the Syrians

A little of what we owed, by God.

JEZEBEL.

You mean, they did not know that there was war.

PASHUR.

They knew it well enough before we ended.

You see these blackened ashes mixed with blood,

That is what Ramoth and her people are.

The King gave order you should see the work.

You see, ashes and blood: by God, I love them.

But that is not the message that I bring.

I bring a message about good King Ahab,

Who rode into the battle in his chariot

Against the chariots of Syria.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Keep yourselves quiet, Syrians, while I tell.
There was a man, who shall be nameless,
Who shall be blameless, or praised aloud,
He with an arrow shot King Ahab
Beneath the arm in the armour joint.

JEZEBEL.

He was behind the King, then, when he shot.

PASHUR.

He wished his work to be successful, lady.

JEZEBEL.

So the King died?

PASHUR.

The Queen knows everything.
He did not die at once, but bled to death,
Down in the shadow of the willow trees.
His blood dripped from his chariot; the dogs licked it,
Even as the Teshbon prophet did foretell.

ROSE-FLOWER.

Let us mourn for the King, for the cedar fallen,
For the eagle fallen from heaven, for the burnt-out fire.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

For the light that shone and is dark, for the word spoken.
For the strength unknit, for the crown brought to the
mire.

JEZEBEL.

My King is dead! I knew that he was dead.
Have you declared this news to any yet?

PASHUR.

Not yet.

JEZEBEL.

Then go; declare it to the priests,
That they may now declare it to the people:

A KING'S DAUGHTER

The King is dead and now his son is King;
King Joram is the King in Israel.

PASHUR.

You are too quick. Joram is not the King.
Jehu, anointed by the Prophet's oil,
Has killed your Joram with an arrow shot
Under his arm, and out right through his heart,
Killing him in his chariot as he drove.
And he has killed his ally, and has flung
Your Joram's body, bloody as it is,
Down into Naboth's vineyard, to the dogs.
Now Bidkar, captain of the charioteers,
Drives the good Jehu hither to be crowned.
Jehu is King, and you, you scarlet whore,
Abominable in the face of God,
You manless, soulless, crownless foreigner,
Shall taste the wrath of God and of God's people.
Now for your spicery there shall be stink,
And where the delicate hair has known the comb
There shall be baldness, and where silk has lain
There shall be nakedness.
And where the red lips mocked God delicately
There shall be broken teeth biting on dust:
It shall be done to you ere this day passes.

(*Exit PASHUR.*)

JEZEBEL.

My King, my sons, are killed! So Jehu wins.
Thus in an hour the world slips from the feet.
What change beyond this world summons us home?
What conclave of the spirits?

Dead: all three.

Bring me my jewels from the tiring-room.

(*The MAIDS go, then return with casket.*)

You women, who were with me from the first,

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Jehu is coming here to murder me.
He will be here in some few minutes now.
Yet there may still be time for you to go.

ROSE-FLOWER.

And time for you, O Queen; you could fly too.
Put on these veils. Oh, hurry! We will take
The door the woman told of, and the horses,
And be in safety on the coast by dawn.

JEZEBEL.

I am the daughter of a Queen, my friends.
My life has been here and my death shall be
Near to my dead. But one task more, my friends.
Swift, from within, my cases of cosmetics,
My crownets and the settings for my hair,
The purple chlamys with the spangs of gold
That long ago my father won at Rhodes,
The robe that once the great Queen Helen had
When she was beauty's self, and gave her beauty
To buy a little love in windy Troy.

(The MAIDS bring the gear.)

That is the last task you shall do for me.

(Gives jewels.)

And this the last least gift that I can give,
With all my thanks for service you have done me,
Year in, year out, for many bitter years.
I think no Queen has ever been so served.
Courage. Here is the key; draw your veils close.

ROSE-FLOWER.

O mistress, come with us!

MOON-BLOSSOM.

Beloved mistress!

What will they do to us, what will they do ?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

JEZEBEL.

Nothing. They will not find you. You will go
Down through the secret door and so away.
Master your tears. You, take her by the arm.
You will be sailing up the coast to Sidon
By sunrise; think.

MOON-BLOSSOM.

And where will you be, lady?

JEZEBEL.

As it is written for me.

(*To ROSE-FLOWER.*)

Sister. Friend.

When you reach Sidon, greet the King, my father,
And give him this, and bid him consecrate
A stone for me. Now go. The gods go with you.

(*The MAIDENS go.*)

I will prepare myself for burial,
Since but a little time remains to me.
There is the dust of Jehu's charioting;
The two Assyrian stallions which we gave him
Coming to end my house.

But first, those women.

Hush! All is still. They must have reached the stable.
That woman spoke the truth, the way was clear.
There is no noise of men arresting them.
The guards are still. Thus far they must be safe.
There is no sound; and see, those men are quiet.
O gods, send messengers to make them safe!
Ay, there they go, on horseback. They are free.
Now let me pray. "O thou great fire of life,
Of whom all lives of men are but the sparks,
Take back this spark into the fire that burns
In the great sun, in all the lesser suns,
In the suns' moons, and everything that lives
In wild blood, and the pushing of the spring;

A KING'S DAUGHTER

And if my ways were darkness, give me darkness,
And if my ways were brightness, give me light."
Now I will decorate myself for death,
As once before, when I was crowned a bride
Here to the King.

First, with this pencil, I
Darken my brows, because they go to death.
And make my eyes bright, since I join my husband
And go again to look upon my sons.
Next I will set this scarlet on my lips,
And on my cheek, lest men should think me pale
And say that I, the Queen, am pale from fear.
Now I will draw Queen Helen's robe about me.
This golden bird is Helen's very hair
That Paris kissed in Troy, my father told me.
Lastly, I will make consecrate my hair
With royal gold, for I will die a Queen.
Now am I as the beauty that I was,
When in my father's palace near the sea
The princess of the Islands came to court me,
Phorbas, and Kreon, and Andemakos,
Kings of the Islands, bright-eyed from the sea,
Men who had gone as strangers to strange lands,
And there made friends by something kindling in them:
Not like this Queen whom once they courted there.
Where are they now, those men who loved me once?
Perhaps alive still in their island homes.
Decked with the precious things of half the world,
And thinking of me sometimes, as men do
Think of old loves long over utterly.
And Tsor of Mura, whom I might have married,
Had I been wise. He will still think of me.
Now will I bare my throat that they may kill me.
How the blood beats that soon will cease to beat!
Poor servant blood, that kept this flesh alive

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Knowing not why, and now shall serve no more
This captive soul that was an earthly Queen.
And I without this servant shall not know
The hour of pain, the sleepless night, the day
Anxious as fever with this troublous world;
Shall know, it may be, nothing more forever,
Or know, it may be, all things burningly,
Know god the spirit as a lover would.
Now I will look if those who come to kill
Are on their way. *(Goes to window.)*

O prison of a city
Which I have hated! Little evil lanes,
Filthy with dogs and lepers and blind men
Made eyeless by the flies. O nest of vipers,
Within few moments I shall pass from you.
Once an Egyptian told me that at death
The soul has power to will its resting-place:
So do I will that I be far from here,
At Sidon on a hilltop near the sea,
Looking at Kittim at a sun-setting.
When all the peaks rise up like crowns of gods
And flame with the gods' thoughts. And past those peaks,
Beyond in the imagined, never seen,
Behind its reef of rocks, and beautiful
With marble and with wonders and with waters,
Is Mura, where my lover was a King.
But hark! they come. I would go forth to Sidon.
To Sidon, or to Kittim, or to Mura,
Some place of the sea-princes near the sea.
I would go forth to Sidon or to Mura,
To Mura, or to Sidon, or to Kittim——

(She sings.)

The April moon is in the sky,
Last night I heard the wild geese cry.

Oh, ho!

A KING'S DAUGHTER

The brooks are bright on Lebanon,
The rain has come, the snows are gone.

Oh, ho!

The north wind faints and soon the south
Will blow the spice smell in the mouth.

Oh, ho!

Then shall my bird the ship take wing
And sail the green seas with the King,
And find, maybe, a finer thing
Than any here.

Oh, ho!

(Enter PHARMAS and ASHOBAL.)

PHARMAS.

Madam, King Jehu and his men are come:
They ask to see you at the window yonder.

JEHU (*outside*).

Come out, you Jezebel, and taste God's judgment,
So that this land which you have wrecked may find
Some little peace!

JEZEHEL.

Had Zimri peace

Who killed his master?

JEHU.

Let me see this whore!

(He clambers up to look in.)

And who is with her?

(Speaks to PHARMAS and ASHOBAL.)

Who is on my side?

Who of you men within are for King Jehu?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PHARMAS *and* ASHOBAL.

We are, great King!

JEHU.

Then throw her down to me.

Seize her and throw her down.

ASHOBAL *and* PHARMAS (*together*).

Down with you, Mistress.

(*Throw her down.*)

JEHU.

Get up, you horses. Would you shrink from flesh?

Tread her; come up, you; over her; once more.

Tread her *again*. I'll teach you who is master.

Ride over her, you fellows, every one.

Ride over her and trample on her body;

Let the beasts kick her. That's the way. Again.

You tread the harlot who has wrecked this land.

Come here and hold my horses, one of you.

Give me a hand, you men, and let me in.

(*Enter JEHU, by the window.*)

That's made an end of her, the filthy witch!

PHARMAS.

I stabbed her with a knife before I threw her.

JEHU.

You, did you? Well, then fetch me wine to drink,

In the King's cup, by God. So. Give it here.

(*Drinks.*)

I needed drink after this day of fighting.

A hot day's work, but, by the living God,

To-morrow shall be hotter. Ahab's sons,

And Ahab's friends, and Ahab's ministers

Shall have their heads in baskets by to-morrow.

Where is this man who says he killed the Queen?

A KING'S DAUGHTER

PHARMAS.

Here, mighty King.

JEHU.

Go, find the cursed hag
And bury up her carrion in the earth,
For after all she was a King's daughter.

(Exit PHARMAS.)

JEHU *(sings)*.

*Oh, out in the desert my bow and my spear
Shall win me whatever I need,
Another man's tent, and another man's gear,
And another man's . . .*

Fill me more wine. Go to the window yonder.
Halt! As you were. I'll go myself. You, fellow.
You fellow, there. Is the Queen's body there?
What does he say?

ASHODAL.

He says that the wild dogs have torn the body.

JEHU.

Good enough end and fitting burial for her.
Now I have sacrifice to do to Baal.
By God, a lusty sacrifice! By God,
These damned idolaters shall learn the truth!
None of your knives on me. *(Goes out.)*

(The SERVANTS and MEN go out.)

Enter MICAIAH (from in front.)

MICAIAH.

She was too good a woman to be Queen
In such a land as this, at such a time.
Would she had gone! Her women have escaped.
And I am freed from prison by the rabble.

A KING'S DAUGHTER

Wisdom is gone from the city,
The killer alone is obeyed,
A man without law, without pity,
Who was fed by the King he betrayed.
The debt that was owing is paid,
By a new deed of murder that cries
To the gods who are Kings in the skies.
Though the ways of the gods are most wise,
They are dark, they make me afraid.

CURTAIN.

END AND BEGINNING

TO
FLORENCE

PERSONS

MARY STUART	..	..	SYBIL M. HERIZ-SMITH
FIRST WOMAN	..	..	JUDITH MASEFIELD
SECOND WOMAN	..	..	ROSE BRUFORD
AN OFFICER..	..	..	LESLIE DAVEY
A NOBLE	..	..	ALBERT FOWLER
A SPIRIT OF BEAUTY	..		CHRYSTABEL DALE ROBERTS

The scene is a small room in Fotheringhay Castle. A settle with a canopy is in the centre. A small table with ink, pens, wine and a cup is to the Actors' Left of this settle.

MARY.

I am that Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scotland:
Once Queen of France, now prisoner here in England.

* * * * *

Evil indeed were my days as the Scottish Queen.

* * * * *

When Bothwell and others murdered my husband,
Darnley,

Bothwell seized me as prize, for he meant to be King.
His fellow-murderers hunted him out of Scotland
And shut me up in Lochleven and seized my realm.

For one brief hour I was free:
Men who were loyal came to me:
For one brief hour, I hoped, in vain,
To win my son and throne again.

I was betrayed again when the battle was joined.
I had to ride for life, drinking the burns
And sleeping in the heather like the grouse.

So, since Scotland was lost, without hope thenceforward,
I came to England to ask for help from the Queen
Who shut me in prison straight and has kept me prisoned
These nineteen years, nearly a half of my life.

It has been strictest prison: in all those years
I have been watched and guarded, my people searched.
Such was my past.

* * * * *

END AND BEGINNING

Last June, my enemies contrived my ruin.
Their agents stirred some hotheads to conspire
To league the French and Spanish against England
And set me free. These hotheads wrote to me.
I sent such answer as a Queen might send.

* * * * *

My answer was in cipher. It was taken
By English spies, who soon deciphered it,
And wrote what they declared a copy of it,
But to it added what their hatred urged,
Passages about killing of the Queen.

Then, being satisfied, they seized the plotters
(Men whom their agents only had set on),
Tortured them to confessing anything,
Then barbarously killed them publicly.
All this in the design to have me killed.

When they were ready, they proclaimed abroad
How God in His great Mercy had revealed
A hellish practice of the Scottish Queen
Against the life of Queen Elizabeth;
How murderers had sworn to run her through
And how French armies and the Spanish fleet
Were coming, to cut every English throat
And make me Queen of England and of Scotland.

The church-bells rang, by order, in each parish
For joy that such a plot had been frustrated.

When they had poisoned every English heart
Against me, to the full, they sent the Peers,
All the great nobles of the Kingdom, led
By Burghley, my chief enemy, "to try me."
That was the phrase they used: they meant my death.

END AND BEGINNING

I, an anointed Queen, unjustly prisoned,
Was threatened, and brow-beaten and accused.
The evidence was their own forgeries
And madness from the tortured men now dead;
Nothing of mine was brought, nor could be brought.
No letter, not one word, written or spoken.
But since they meant my death, I was condemned
To suffer death.

I stand here under sentence;
Certain not to receive more mercy now
Than in the past: certain not to be rescued:
Certain to die in very few more days.
I try not to dread death; but oh, I dread
Lest murderers should kill me secretly,
Then publish that I killed myself, defiling
This that God consecrated to be Queen.
I pray I be not murdered secretly.

Such is my present: for my future, this
My life's device: the puzzle "In my End
Is my Beginning": I have often wondered,
And wonder now, what future it foretells.

Rescue and freedom and the hope of life
These I put by: they cannot come to me.
I will endure whatever God shall send
And bear His gift of being Queen unshaken
While He gives breath to me.

For not much longer
Shall I have breath. The winter night is dark.
I will pray God, and then lie down to rest.

(She goes Left Back.)

(The WOMEN enter on lower stage, FIRST WOMAN Left, SECOND Right. They go up on to the upper stage and stand Centre.)

END AND BEGINNING

FIRST WOMAN.

A man in a black cloak hastens down
The palace stairs in a sleeping town.

A white-faced man who means no good
With a parchment, sealed, hid under his hood.

He mounts his horse and he rides north west,
He rides like Death and he looks unblest.

Is it a head or a skull that hides
Under his cloak as he rides and rides?

He is a man, for he draws quick breath
But he rides like Death and he brings death

Spirits like his go by in glare
When the bounds of hell are in the air.

SECOND WOMAN.

Another man rides the self-same course
Through the sleeping land on a Queen's horse,

A gallows-tree man, whose fit salute
Is the fox's howl and the owl's hoot.

He sings, as he rides, an evil strain,
He looks like Cain and he is Cain.

What does he bear in the canvas pack
Buckled against him on his back?

When he stops to drink, he draws it bare:—
An axe-blade bright as a plough's share.

END AND BEGINNING

He kisses the blade and cries, "My chink,
You shall soon eat: you shall soon drink."

FIRST WOMAN.

The riders have met: they ride like friends
Who have ends in common and evil ends.

They turn at the cross: they draw nigh,
They are coming here, not going by.

The horn at the castle gate is blown,
The gate opens, the hinges groan.

They ride within to the castle-yard,
The gate shuts, it is locked and barred.

There are lights in the yard: the gaoler goes
To ask 'Who has come there?' Now he knows.

(Indicating Right Back.)

And now they enter the gaoler's den.
Lighten our Night from midnight men.

SECOND WOMAN.

What do they plot in the gaoler's room
Whispering white-faced in the gloom?

No great good from a secret three:—
Verjuice, vigilance, gallows-tree.

What do they whisper? Why do they call
For a wooden stage in the castle hall?

Why does vigilance creep the stair,
Up, up, up, to the curtain there?

END AND BEGINNING

Why does he stand there, breathing deep,
Near midnight thus, with the Queen asleep?

Why has he come here? What does he mean?
(OFFICER enters. *Right Back.*)

OFFICER.

Women. I want to see the Queen.

FIRST WOMAN.

The Queen, our lady, has gone to rest.

OFFICER.

Go, then, and rouse her: it were best.

FIRST WOMAN.

Sir, we are loath to break her sleep.

OFFICER.

The news I bring her will not keep.

FIRST WOMAN.

Sir, may we know what news you bring?

OFFICER.

Fetch me this Queen to know the thing.

FIRST WOMAN.

Sir, may we know what noble calls?

OFFICER.

One who has stages built in halls
And hung with black, for what may chance.
One with men masked as for a dance

END AND BEGINNING

Also in black, a sullen two.
Sharp practice is the craft they do.
One who has passports that shall free
All prisoners whatsoe'er they be.
Yellow-sealed passports writ in red.
Go: fetch your lady out of bed.

FIRST WOMAN.

Since you bring freedom, I will go.

(FIRST WOMAN goes.)

OFFICER, (*indicating throne*).

You, pretty mistress, may I know
What this gay trumpery may be?

SECOND WOMAN.

Our lady's, the Queen's, dignity.

OFFICER.

Our dignity? the Queen's? Her state?
Her throne shall rest me as I wait. (*He sits.*)

SECOND WOMAN.

You must not sit in the Queen's chair.

OFFICER.

Must not, my mistress? I am there.

SECOND WOMAN.

You shall not do her this offence.

OFFICER.

Girl, do you think to drive me hence?
You and your sisters and this Queen

END AND BEGINNING

That memory of what once has been?
I do my will here, nor think twice
Of this old dignity's device,
But beat it down where it belongs.

(He tears down the device.)

SECOND WOMAN.

They shall not let you do these wrongs,
I'll call her men. *(She goes Left Back.)*

OFFICER.

Call whom you will.
Now all the castle is as still
As the deep grave: but silently
My carpenters all work for me
Raising a stage within the hall,
Making no hammer-noise at all,
As men who fashion coffins use.
All silent fastening with screws.
And some strew black and others red
Where this, the Scottish Queen, shall tread

Down in the barns, the halberdiers
Sleep with the straw about their ears.
Among the ashes crickets keep
Their cry to folk who cannot sleep.
The owls hoot and the foxes bark;
The sick man's candle shocks the dark;
All the invisible great Night
Heaves slowly over bringing light.

And when the light comes, then, ah then,
Word will go thrilling among men.
When cricket, owl and fox are gone

END AND BEGINNING

Men will come thronging, and anon
When all the gateways gleam with spears
And the slow death-bell nulls the ears
And all the hundreds in the hall
Wait for a woman's step and all
Turn at her coming and a bright
Steel axblade flashes in the light . . .
But the deer comes: the hunt is up.

(MARY enters, Left Back. She comes down the stage to the Centre. The two WOMEN keep well back to the Left of the stage. MARY expects the visitor to be a murderer sent to kill her.)

OFFICER.

Madam, I have a word for you. Attend.
You, madam, were admonished to repent
And to confess your manifold offences
Against Elizabeth our gracious Queen.
You have not shewn contrition nor sense of fault,
Therefore the Queen has ordered me to strike
Your canopy, and signify to you
That you are a dead woman,
Deprived of honour, dignity and queenship.

MARY.

God of His Grace called me to be a Queen.
I have been anointed and sacred as a Queen.
I hold my dignity of Him alone,
To Him I will resign it, with my soul.
I do not recognize your Queen as mine
Nor her heretical council for my judges.
I will die a Queen, in spite of those whose power
Is like that which the robbers exercise
In some dark den on righteous folk. I trust
That God, after my death, will manifest
The integrity of my cause to all this realm.

END AND BEGINNING

Often, Kings in this country have been murdered.
No wonder, then, if I should have that fate,
Being of that same royal blood. King Richard
Was treated thus, because of his just rights.

OFFICER (*striking down the canopy*).

Madam. There lies your canopy and here
I sit, with covered head. (*He sits with covered head.*)

I tell you frankly
You have no time nor leisure left to you
For idle recreations, so be warned.
(*The NOBLE enters, Right Back.*)

NOBLE.

Madam, God save your grace. You, sir, arise
And if you are not brazen, be ashamed
Of such foul rudeness. Since you cannot blush
Means shall be found to make you sensible
Of your brutality. Stand further back.
Madam, I grieve that any officer
Should have behaved thus foully to your grace.
I ask your pardon.

I am deeply grieved
To tell you that my Sovereign sends me here
To bring you heavy tidings.
Twelve weeks since
We told you of your Doom and sentence passed.

Now we bring warrant to enact that sentence.
I ask that you will hear it read aloud.
First show her Grace the Kingdom's seal affixed.
(*The OFFICER shows the seal.*)

MARY.

I observe the great seal. I attend the reading.

END AND BEGINNING

NOBLE.

Read, then, the warrant of our Sovereign Queen.

OFFICER.

Elizabeth, by the grace of God Queen of England, France and Ireland:—knowing the sentence given by Us and others of Our Council against the erstwhile Queen of Scotland, bearing the name of Mary, we now command and enjoin you to take the said Queen of Scotland and see that execution be done upon her person, for which this shall be your full and sufficient discharge forever. From our House at Greenwich, Feb. 1st, the 29th year of our Reign.

I display the Sovereign's signature appended.
God save the Queen.

MARY.

In the name of God, these tidings are most welcome.
I bless and praise His Power that the end
Of all my bitter sufferings is at hand.
I do not think the Queen, my sister Queen,
Would ever have consented to my death.
God's will be done.
He is my witness, I shall render up
My Spirit to His hands all innocent
Of all offence against her.
I shall appear before God's Majesty
Clear of all crimes whereof I am accused.
That soul is far unworthy of the joys
Of Heaven, whose body cannot bear one moment
The executioner's stroke. Death will be welcome.
What time has been appointed for my suffering?

NOBLE.

To-morrow morning at eight o'clock, Madam.

END AND BEGINNING

MARY.

That is very sudden and leaves me no time
For preparation. I have not yet made
My Will, because my papers have been seized
Needs must that I endeavour to provide
For faithful servants who have sacrificed
All things for my sake and in losing me
Will lose all things. I therefore beg of you
A little longer time, to make my will
And fit my soul for death.

OFFICER.

You have had time.
It's more than two months since I brought you word
You were condemned.

NOBLE.

No, no, madam, alas.
It is not in our power to grant you time.
You die to-morrow at the hour named.
But to prepare your soul, with consolation
You may have either the Bishop or the Dean.
The Dean is a most learned theologian,
Able to show the errors of the falsehood
In which you were brought up, and teach the truth.
And as you have so little time to live
It would be well if you confessed your faults
And seized the true faith for your soul's salvation,
Not trifle with vain toys. You have some wisdom,
And may be able to discern the truth,
Hearing the learned Dean.

MARY.

I have heard much,
And read much, on this subject of salvation

END AND BEGINNING

Since I was prisoner here. My mind's resolved
To die in the religion of my baptism.
I willingly would give ten thousand lives
If that might be, not only shed my blood
But bear the harshest tortures, in that cause.

OFFICER.

Your life would be the death of our religion,
Your death will save it. Madam, you say true,
You die for the religion of your baptism.

MARY.

Ah, I have never dared self-flattery so
As think that I was worthy such a death;
And I receive it humbly as an earnest
That I am numbered among God's chosen servants.

I have been harshly used here. I am Queen
Of Scotland, the Queen-Dowager of France,
The great grand-daughter of an English King,
Your Queen's most near relation and true heir.
I who was promised friendship have had prison
For nineteen years, through guile of ministers.
Now, by false accusation, I am cast
Illegally, without authority,
To perish by the headsman.

I take God

To witness on this Testament, that never,
Never did I desire, seek, nor favour
The killing of your Queen.

OFFICER.

Your book is popish,
Your oath no worth.

END AND BEGINNING

MARY.

It is my Church's Gospel,
More sacred, as I think, than that you use.
I thank you; but I will not see your priests.
I beg that I may see my almoner.

NOBLE.

That is against our law.

OFFICER.

And against conscience.

MARY.

Then I must trust God's mercy to excuse
The want of rites such as His holy Church
Declares to be essential before death.
Tell me this: Has the Queen of England sent
An answer to my letter?

NOBLE.

No. No answer.

MARY.

Will she allow my body to be taken
By these my servants to be laid in France
By the late King, my husband, at St. Denis
Or by my Mother, the late Queen, at Rheims?

NOBLE.

We do not know this.

MARY.

Will your Queen return
My papers, and allow my poor true servants
To have the trifling payments I bequeath them?

END AND BEGINNING

OFFICER.

I think, that as your papers cannot please
Her Majesty, they will be all returned.
Your little furniture will be departed
As you dispose.

MARY.

Is my son well?

NOBLE.

Yes, lady.

MARY.

How does he take my treatment?

OFFICER.

He digests it.

Such are his words.

MARY.

Has he, have other princes
Of Christendom made efforts in my cause?

NOBLE.

No, madam, none; they will not, neither can.

MARY.

My secretaries: are they dead?

NOBLE.

Alive.

MARY.

Is Nau alive?

END AND BEGINNING

NOBLE.

He is, but in close prison.

MARY.

Nau is the author of my death; he has
Sacrificed me to save his own life: surely.

NOBLE (*to OFFICER*).

I remit this lady to your hands again.
You will take charge of her till I return.

FIRST WOMAN (*coming down*).

Sir, I must make a protest, ere you go.
Think of the suddenness of this announcement,
The shortness of the time that you allow
My royal mistress to dispose affairs
Temporal and eternal: the meanest man,
Nay, sir, the vilest criminal on earth
Waiting the cart, would have been granted longer
To fit his soul for death. More courtesy,
More reverence, should surely be displayed
To a Princess and Queen, and such a Queen.

NOBLE.

I have no power to prolong the time.

(NOBLE and OFFICER go out, *Right Back*.)

(MARY sits Centre. WOMEN weep Left.)

MARY.

Leave weeping, now; be doing: time is short.
Did I not say, my children, this would fall?
Blessed be God that it has fallen, and fear
And sorrow are at an end. Weep not. Lament not.
It cannot help; rather rejoice to see

END AND BEGINNING

The end of all my troubles and afflictions.
Did you not mark the power of truth? They said
That I was doomed for an attempt to kill
The Queen of England, of which crime you know
That I am innocent. But now this Lord
Lets out the fact, that it is on account
Of my religion. Oh, the glorious thought
That I am chosen to die for such a cause.
Fill now that little drinking-cup with wine.

(FIRST WOMAN *fills and brings.*)

I drink to you, my faithful follower,
Wishing you happier days in years to come
Than you have known in prison here with me.
May a blessing from my thanks be with you always.
Now will you drink to me?

(FIRST WOMAN *kneels.*)

FIRST WOMAN.

O my beloved Queen, for pity, pardon,
Forgive me if I ever failed or pained you.

MARY.

Friend, you can never know, never imagine
The joy your faith has given me all these years.

(*To the* SECOND WOMAN.)

Now let me drink to you, wishing you blessing
And peace and happiness within your home;
All lovely things that you have sacrificed
To be with me, God thank you for it, friend.
Will you pledge me?

SECOND WOMAN.

If ever I offended you, or injured,
Forgive me, I beseech you, oh forgive me.

END AND BEGINNING

MARY.

That I most gladly do, if there be cause,
But cannot think there be. I entreat you,
If I have ever treated either of you
With harshness or injustice, pardon me.

FIRST WOMAN.

You were never, never anything but gentle.

SECOND WOMAN.

And we, dull clods, ever remiss and grudging.

MARY (*sits*).

Let me give last commands, my faithful servants.
When I am gone, be constant in religion,
Love one another, and, for my sake, cease
Your little quarrels and your jealousies,
And live in Christian amity together,
Which will be easier, now that one has gone
Who used to sow dissension in the household.

(*She rises.*)

(*To FIRST WOMAN.*)

You, gentle friend, go to my almoner
Since I have been forbidden: ask him from me
To recommend such prayers and gospel verses
As he thinks fittest for me; ask him, too,
To keep in prayer and vigil with and for me
All through to-night: No. I must write this to him.
Come, then, within and I will write to him.
Then I will part the little queenly splendour
Left to me, with my friends: and so be ready
To start uncumbered on my road to God.

(*They go out Left Back.*)

CURTAIN.

END AND BEGINNING

OFFICER (*discovered*).

So, not much longer shall I have this charge,
After these years of ceaseless vigilance,
Daylong and nightlong, plot and counterplot,
Alarms and false alarms, and day and night
Wondering whether rescuers would come
Or whether her fine craft would find a means
To write and bribe and compass an escape.
Now she is in the net with no escape,
And the Queen does it: warrant signed and sealed.
The nobles in commission to enforce it.
I have escaped: it has not fallen to me.

And yet, only a few short days ago,
We keepers had a letter from the Court
From Walsingham and Davison together
Saying that Queen Elizabeth has noted
A lack of zeal in us, that all this time
We have not of ourselves found out a way
Of shortening the Scotch Queen's life; that she,
Elizabeth, thought this a lack of love
In us towards her, and a lack of care
Of true religion and the public good;
That she, Elizabeth, took it unkindly
That we, shrinking from keeping of our oaths,
Cast all the burden of the task on her
Who hated, as we know, shedding of blood,
Especially the blood of a princess
So near related.

This, that so greatly troubled her, was sent
For our good judgments, meaning that the hint
So given should be taken and ourselves
Murder this foreign princess, and then doubtless
Be murdered by the law for doing so.

END AND BEGINNING

But God be thanked we were not to be caught
By such like hints of murder: now, to-day
Elizabeth will do the deed herself.
Mary will die this morning, and to-night
I shall sleep soundly, knowing she is dead.
O me, what utter joy: some little trouble
Perhaps in sending off her foreign servants,
Then peace at last.

All things are now prepared
For her last scene: the scaffold has been built
In the great hall: the block is in its place
All covered decently with cheap black cloth.
A scarlet cushion lies for her to kneel on
To take the stroke: I've had a fire lit
In the great hall: it is such frosty weather.
Let me recount what other things are ready.
The barricade to keep spectators back.
The Sheriff's spears and the Earl Marshal's men
Standing to arms as guards: the courtyards full
Already, of the cuntrypeople gathered
To cheer when her head falls. A band of music
To play, as though a witch were being burned,
The tune of 'Jumping Joan.' Horses are ready
To bear the news to London to the Court.
Ay, and the chief clown of the play is ready
All dressed in black and in his mask of black.
The ruffian headsman, Bull, is in his place,
Lolling upon the scaffold railing joking
With the earl's grooms and footmen, and at times
Supping his brandy, whetting up his axe
And calling "Where's this cow that Bull shall tame?"
But there:—after the execution has been done
The Earls must dine: I must attend to that . . .
They will need wine, and good . . . I must give orders.
(*He goes out, Right Back.*)

END AND BEGINNING

FIRST WOMAN.

Like a fair day, she has been more beautiful
At sunset. When her treasures had been shared
Among us, she began a farewell letter
To the French King, then wrote her will, and then
Commended us, her servants, to his care.
Poor, beautiful great soul she was exhausted
By all this thought.
At her night prayers she bade me read to her
In Scripture, of some Saint who had sinned greatly.
"Read of the penitent thief upon the Cross:—
He was a sinner—not so great as I,"
She cried, "O may my blessed Lord, in memory
Of His dear Passion, in my hour of death
Have mercy on me as He had on him."
Then having listened to those blessed words
She laid her down to rest and closed her eyes.
Her beauty was as quiet as in sleep.
I think she never slept, but inly prayed,
Sometimes we saw her smile.

After her rest she called us to her, saying
"I have but two hours' life remaining to me.
Dress me for Death as for a festival."
And, being dressed, she said a piteous thing:—
"In my last instant, I shall be incapable
Of thinking of this body. I beseech you
For the dear love of our most blessed Saviour
Do not forsake me as I suffer death
There in the hangman's hands, but cover me."
In some few minutes now that lovely soul
Will be flung forth from life by ruffian hands;
Torn from this place, which, though it has been prison,
Has still been home; her love has made it home.
There is no help for us: the thing will be.

END AND BEGINNING

(*MARY enters with SECOND WOMAN. She bears her will and papers.*)

MARY.

Women, I have been very blest this morning.
For though my priest has been forbidden me,
I had the Holy Elements, with leave
From Rome, to offer them myself, ere death.
I am so stayed with angels, I have comfort
In my so soon release from long affliction.
Once, when I was a child, my uncle told me
"That I had all the courage of my race
And should know well how to die." He never thought
That I should prove his truth in such a death.

But happiness and earthly greatness pass.
Witness myself, the Queen of France and Scotland
By birth and marriage, crowned with worldly honour,
Brought subject to the executioner,
Though innocent, thank God, of any crime.
The crime alleged is but a flimsy pretext
For my destruction.

I beseech you both
Be present at my death, be witnesses
Of my deportment and my faith. I know
It will be agony to you to watch:
Yet watch: be witnesses: you love me most.

When all is over, you may be permitted
To bear my body into France: I beg you
Stay all together as a family
Till you can do this.

I will say farewell
To you, with all my thanks. (*She kisses the FIRST WOMAN.*)
And now to you
Farewell, and thanks for countless services.

END AND BEGINNING

SECOND WOMAN.

O my beloved mistress, I beseech you
Forgive me, and forgive my brother, too.

MARY.

Oh, rise. I forgive him and everyone
As I myself now hope to be forgiven.

FIRST WOMAN

O Madam, pardon me, if I say this:—
Renée and Gillies beg me to remind you
They are not in your Will: they are not greedy
Of gifts, but pray it never may be thought
That they have been unfaithful in their service.

MARY.

That never shall be said. What can I leave them?
Renée shall have . . . (*she writes*) and
Gillies shall have that . . . (*writes*)
I thank you for reminding me.

FIRST WOMAN.

And madam,
Your almoner . . . you have omitted him.

MARY.

True, thank you: that will need a little thought.
(*She thinks, then writes.*)

There then, I leave the last of my possessions.
And now that I have finished with the world,
My friends, let us all kneel and pray together
For the last time.

(*They kneel, facing slightly Left.*)

END AND BEGINNING

MARY.

O Domine Deus, speravi in Te;
O care me Jesu, nunc libera me.
In dura catena, in misera paena, desidero
Languendo, gemendo et genu flectendo
Adoro, imploro, ut liberes me.
(*There is a knocking on the door Right Back.*)
See what the knocking is.

(FIRST WOMAN goes.)

FIRST WOMAN.

Speak, who is there?

OFFICER.

Her hour has come: the clock has stricken eight.

FIRST WOMAN.

Her Majesty is praying with her servants.

OFFICER.

Ah. Let her pray then for a little while.

MARY.

Unbolt the door; there must be no resistance . . .
That would bring violence.

(FIRST WOMAN returns.)

Come, sisters, let us pray.
"Thou art my rock and my fortress,
Therefore for Thy Name's sake, lead me.

I am forgotten as a dead man.
I am like a broken vessel.

I have heard the slander of many,
They devised to take away my life.

END AND BEGINNING

Cast me not away from Thy presence.

Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

(There is a knocking at the door.)

The Lord is my refuge and my fortress,

My God, in Him will I trust.

(The knocking again.)

Go, open to them; then return to us.

(The FIRST WOMAN opens the door: then returns and kneels.)

Because thou hast made the Lord thy habitation

There shall no evil befall thee.

(The OFFICER enters silently.)

For He shall give his angels charge over thee

To keep thee in all His ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands."

OFFICER.

See. I am come. I am come.

MARY *(to SECOND WOMAN)*.

Give me the little cross into my hand.

(The NOBLE enters. MARY rises.)

MARY.

So, gentlemen, you come to seek for me.

I am ready and am resolute to die.

So let us go. But I am very lame.

Help me, my friends.

(The WOMEN help her.)

(They take two or three steps, then stop.)

FIRST WOMAN.

Your Majesty . . . this thing we cannot do.

We'll wait upon you, die with you, if granted,

But oh, we cannot lead you to your death.

END AND BEGINNING

MARY.

You are right. (*To NOBLE.*) See, Sir; my servants cannot lead me
To death: I cannot walk without support.
I must have help.

NOBLE.

We will assist you down.

OFFICER.

You women, stand aside and come no further.

FIRST WOMAN.

But we come, too.

SECOND WOMAN.

We are to go with her.

OFFICER.

You'll stay, or you'll be made to, by brute force.
You foreign, Romish hussies: get you back.

FIRST WOMAN.

It is most cruel and unparalleled
To rob her at her death of faithful servants
Who have borne many years of prison with her.

OFFICER.

Cruel or not, you'll find it is the case.

MARY.

I have requests to make: let them be granted . . .
The money given by me to Curle my servant
It has been snatched from him by brutal hands.
May it be restored to him?

END AND BEGINNING

OFFICER.

Why, yes: it shall be.

MARY.

May all my servants be allowed to have
My poor bequests?

NOBLE.

Yes, certainly, they shall.

MARY.

May they be kindly treated and sent safely
To their own countries after I am dead?

NOBLE.

I cannot doubt it: nay, I promise it.

MARY.

I thank you deeply for these courtesies.
Lastly, I conjure you, that these poor friends,
My dear, afflicted servants may be with me
There at my death, that they may see me die.

NOBLE.

No, madam, what you ask cannot be granted.
For if it should be, some of them with speeches,
Swoonings and what not, would be grievous to you.
And troublesome and noisome to ourselves,
We've had experience of friends at headings.
Also they would not stick
To put some superstitious trumpery in practice,
The least would be dipping their handkerchiefs
Into your Grace's blood for relics of you.
It would be most unfit to permit this.

END AND BEGINNING

MARY.

I will give my word, although it be but dead,
My Lord, that they shall do none of these things.
Alas, poor souls, the only good they ask
Is to take leave of me. I hope your Mistress,
Being a Maiden Queen,
Will vouchsafe, for the sake of Womanhood,
That women may be by me at my death.
I know her Majesty hath not given you
Such strict commission, but that you might grant me
Far greater courtesy than this'. . .
Even were I woman of far meaner calling.

OFFICER.

What shall it be, Sir? I'm against it, truly.

NOBLE.

Madam, the inconveniences are such
As I have told you. These must stand aside.

MARY.

I am Cousin to your Queen, of the Blood Royal
Of Henry Tudor, Dowager of France,
And sacred and anointed Queen of Scotland,
Yet you refuse me this.

NOBLE (*to OFFICER*).

It is harsh measure.

She is a peerless lady.

OFFICER.

These are not.

These will but scream and swoon and cause disturbance
And put the headsman off his stroke belike.

END AND BEGINNING

NOBLE.

There will be guards enough to quiet them.

OFFICER.

That, sir, is not the point: they will upset
The dignity and office of the law
And rouse the sympathies of malcontents.

NOBLE.

I'll run the risk of that.

(*To the QUEEN.*) Madam, I grant you
Leave to choose two from out your women servants.

MARY.

I choose these two: the best loved that I have.

NOBLE.

If, as we pass, you would select four men
Out of your household, I will grant you those.

MARY.

Let me then choose the four dear faithful ones,
Good Andrew Melville, Master of my Household,
(*To SECOND WOMAN*)

Will you go bid him meet me at the stairfoot?
Come with him there.

(*SECOND WOMAN goes out Left Back.*)

And you, will you go call Bourgoigne and Gervais
And Gourion, my doctors, who have tended
Me, in my sicknesses these many years?
Tell them to follow to the Court below.
Let them bring you.

(*FIRST WOMAN goes out Left Back.*)

END AND BEGINNING

(To NOBLE.)

Sir, let me thank you truly for this grace . . .
It will mean much to these poor friends of mine.
Now, sir, another kindness if you will,
Lend me your arm to help me down the stairs
When we have reached the level of the hall,
Then I will walk alone, the few brief steps
That lead me to the presence of my God.

(She goes out Right Back, leaning on the NOBLE's arm. The OFFICER holds the curtain and follows her.)

(A SPIRIT OF BEAUTY enters Left and goes Centre.)

THE SPIRIT.

I live in Life's intenseness: everywhere
I bring the heavenly salt of being fair.

Something of me is in the torted rings
Of the green viper whipped round flapping wings;

And in the bird who floats on the wind's stream
Watching the currents crawl in the sea's gleam;

And in the barry reeds, the velvet slink
Of noiseless pads of death coming to drink;

And in the lion-leap on the gazelle
The desert-skimmer broken at the well;

And in the stallion hurtling like the spear,
And in all bright-eyed things wide-eyed from fear;

And in all butterflies whose scarlet glows
On honey trumpets before summer goes.

* * * * *

END AND BEGINNING

In the first primrose from the Spring's green blood,
When blackbirds build behind the blackthorn bud.

And in the Summer when the living green
Calls the red rose for King, the white for Queen;

In Autumn's apples on the leafless branch;
In cornfields that the harvest moon doth blanch;

In Winter's silence of the Earth grown old
With all the forest standing still i' the cold;

All these are mine: and something of me strives
In childhood's memory of other lives

Of firelight in caves, and water falling
And padding were-wolves in the midnight calling.

* * * * *

I quicken life: the curling of my lip
Gleams in the forefoot of the leaping ship.

I laugh in forges where the hammers smite
Red sparks and yellow from the glowing white.

I wrestle in all struggles: on all courses
I urge the wheels: I gallop with the horses.

I triumph in all windvanes set as crown
On swaying spires up above the town.

I key the arch beneath which Emperors pass,
I am the palace that the conqueror has.

All conquest and all laurel and all prize
Are madness for the brightness of my eyes.

* * * * *

END AND BEGINNING

I am that colour and singing in the mind
That make the painter faint, the poet blind.

I am the tower men think of as they build,
I am the gold men think of as they gild.

I am the city shining like the sun
With power exercised and glory done.

I am the truth to which the seeker strains,
I am the living lightning upon brains.

I am the key by which man's mind unlocks
Wisdom from prison, water from all rocks.

* * * * *

I deck the lovely girl, that men may see
Beauty in Time and in Eternity.

I gird the lively lad, that after ages
May have a story blazoned upon pages.

I move among all living things, to bless
The instant that annuls all nothingness,

That only is eternal, the swift thrill
Into the bliss that killing cannot kill.

And that my lovers find: and this one finds
In treacheries that stun, in grief that blinds,

In agony of longing to be free,
A centre constant in inconstancy.

* * * * *

END AND BEGINNING

So from the shocking second she will pass
Into the quiet that the planet has

In dewy mornings, when the forest lies
Dark, and the dim world slumbers with shut eyes

And yet no colour glows, and owls are gone
And that still lamp the planet is alone

Possessing all the peace, lighting and riding,
The Hope become alive, beauty abiding.

Among that planet's quiet, she'll descry
The wild duck stringing, crying as they fly

And laughing, fly with them, and see the night
Drift into colour, colour into light

And know the nightmare over, that has been
Living on earth a prisoner and a queen.

What then shall follow, shall be what she wrought:
The faith, the hope, the charity of her thought.

(Exit Left Front.)

NOBLE (*enters*).

The purpose of our Queen, Elizabeth,
Declared upon her warrant, signed and sealed,
Has been enacted. It is now my duty
To tell you how the woman, Mary Stuart,
Met death some minutes since there in the hall.

Though she was lame, her spirit was too queenly
To falter before peril: she walked proudly
Straight to the scaffold foot, but asked for help

END AND BEGINNING

Up the steep steps. Her gaoler helped her up,
She smiled on him and said "I thank you, sir,
This is the last trouble that I shall give you."

Then sitting in the chair beside the block
She heard the Warrant for her death proclaimed.
She smiled with a sweet smile and crossed herself
And asked that the old priest, her almoner,
Might be permitted there to pray with her.
That was refused. We could not grant her that.
Then Doctor Fletcher, Dean of Peterborough,
Standing outside the scaffold, bending low,
Began to preach at her. She gently checked him
With "Trouble not yourself nor me, for know
That I am settled in the ancient faith
Defending which I mind to spend my blood."

"Madam," the Dean replied, "change your opinion.
Repent you of your former wickedness."

"Good Mr. Dean," she said, "good Mr. Dean,
Trouble yourself no more about this matter,
I was born in this religion and am resolved
To die in this religion, by God's grace."

We, seeing her resolved in stubbornness,
Said, "Madam, we will pray with Mr. Dean,
For you, that you may have your spirit lightened
With the true knowledge."

"O my Lords," she said,
"If you will pray with me, even from my heart,
I'll thank you for it: but to pray with you
After your manner,
You being not of the one faith with me,
Would be a sin."

END AND BEGINNING

At this I told the Dean,
"Speak, at your pleasure."

So the Dean began
Some bitter hometruths against anti-Christ,
Good comfortable doctrine: a soul's purge:
Alas, she did not heed: like the deaf adder
She turned from him.

She read aloud some Psalms
And prayed in Latin, then in French and English,
For God's forgiveness of her sins and foes.
For the afflicted Church, and the two kingdoms,
Then for her Son and Queen Elizabeth.
Then, rising from her knees, she raised her cross
And cried on Christ to take her and blot out
Her sins.

At this I interrupted her.
"Madam," I said, "it would be better for you
To eschew such trumpery and bear your Lord
Deep in your heart."

She answered a strange thing:
"How can I bear in hand a carven image
Of my Redeemer without bearing Him
Deep in my heart as well?"

The headsmen knelt and begged for her forgiveness.
She said, "I forgive you and all the world
With all my heart, because I hope this death
Will give an end to all my troubles."

At this
She raised her hands as though to lift her coif

END AND BEGINNING

To be ready for the block. Then both the hangmen
Came up to help her, but she drew away
And asked them not to touch her. "For," she said,
"I have not been accustomed to such pages;
Nor to disrobe before so great a throng."
She beckoned to her women, who with screams
And cryings, were incapable of helping.
"Come, do not weep," she said. "I am most happy
To leave this world: you also should rejoice
To see me dying in a cause so good.
Nay, be ashamed to weep: if you lament thus
I can but send you hence; remember, friends,
That I have promised for you."

Then very calmly
She as one going to her rest withdrew
The bright pins from her lawn, and lifted off
Her gold pomander, chain and rosary.

And this, the executioner, John Bull,
Snatched from her hands and thrust it in his shoe.
But the tall waiting-woman who was here
Struggled to get it from him: snatching at it
And wrestling with him there.

The Scottish Queen
Turned gently to the brute and spoke these words:
"Friend, let her have it, she will give you thrice
Its money value"; but the brute replied,
"It is my perquisite and it is mine."

Then she embraced and kissed and blessed her ladies
And drew on crimson sleeves and bade them bind
A handkerchief and Corpus Christi cloth

END AND BEGINNING

Over her eyes. She said, "O do not weep,
But pray for me."

So she was left alone
Kneeling upon the cushion near the block.
In the dead stillness, her clear thrilling voice
Spoke out with rapture: *In te Domine.*
And bowing down her head upon the block,
She prayed, *In manus tuas, Domine.*

Then, as one hangman gripped her hands, John Bull
Struck clumsily, and held the head aloft,
And cried "God save our Queen Elizabeth."

"So let her enemies perish," cried the Dean.

But only one man there answered Amen.
All there were moved by the most piteous end
Of the most gracious, courteous royal lady
That ever was betrayed by brutal men
And greedy men, and scoundrels and base knaves,
Falsehood, and savagery and forgery.

Not yet are all the damned indignities
Done on her body that have been commanded:
I will not speak of those, only say this:
That I shall ever bitterly repent
The orders laid upon me to make harsh
Her passing from this world.
No man, not even a courtier, can betray her
Again, forever: as I think, her reign
As Queen begins now. She is beautiful
In the world's heart, and human policy
Has done its worst upon her and yet failed.
May her lovely spirit be in bliss this moment.

(*He goes out*)

END AND BEGINNING

(The Curtain is nearly drawn, and the light dimmed. After ten seconds, the SPIRIT OF MARY enters silently to the Centre of the stage.)

MARY.

How soon the bitternesses cease:
This little minute from release
Has made them end.
In my beginning there is peace.

O marvellous quiet, without fear
Of what can happen or appear
By chance or will.
Life at its very heart is here.

O excellence beyond all trust,
O ecstasy untoucht by dust,
O treasure true,
Untettered by the moth and rust.

I lift in quiet into light,
Exultant, deathless, infinite,
Joy beyond joy.
The beauty equal with the might.

CURTAIN.

